

Paying Attention to Aid

A Comparative Study of Aid Policy Change in Australia,
the United Kingdom and the Netherlands

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Declaration

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Benjamin Day

December 2017

For Mum and Dad

Acknowledgments

The overwhelming feeling I have when reflecting on the journey leading to the submission of this thesis is one of gratitude. The opportunity to be able to dedicate such a lengthy period to a singular pursuit of this nature is a privilege. To point this out is clichéd, of course, but that makes it no less true. I have cherished the experience and have also been immensely stretched by it. However, where my sense of gratitude is most strongly directed is towards the individuals who have taken this journey with me, or lent their support along the way.

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This thesis benefited from my presenting material from it at numerous conferences. In 2014, 2015 and 2016, I presented at the Australasian Aid Conference, an annual conference run by the Development Policy Centre at ANU. The Development Policy Centre has been a wonderful resource for me in other ways during the PhD, not least in providing an avenue to publish blog posts through the Devpolicy Blog. I also presented my work at the Oceanic Conference on International Studies (OCIS) at the University of Queensland in 2016. Most helpful, however, was the opportunity to present the key argument this study advances at ‘The Domestic Dimensions of Development Cooperation Conference’ at the University of Antwerp, an event jointly organized by the Institute of Development Policy and Management and the German Institute for Development Evaluation. This event allowed me to engage with key scholars from the determinants of aid literature, including David Hudson, who acted as a discussant for my presentation. David’s suggestions in Belgium, alongside other conversations in Australia and London, were amongst the most influential in setting the direction for this study.

I am also so grateful for the many people I was able to interview. For me, the excuse to be able to approach so many fascinating people and ask to talk to them was the highlight of my PhD.

Undertaking a PhD is, of course, an academic pursuit. Yet, while I have been the one working on the document, there would be no thesis without the support of my family. My family know what a challenge this process has been, and how despairing many points in the journey have been. Having young children is difficult. Raising them away from any family is more difficult still. And while that’s all true, there is that nothing gives me as much joy as coming home to my two boys. I love Noah’s wonder and constant questioning. I love Eli’s spirit and zest for life. And I love that they that they don’t care less about this thesis.

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opportunity (truly, it has been a joint effort), and to our boys, is the bedrock that this thesis is built on. She is my most trusted adviser.

Apart from Laura, there is nobody who I wanted to read the 'final product' more than my father-in-law. Dad passed away just two months ago. He would have said he loved it no matter what, but I still wanted to hear him say it. Mom has faced so much that is challenging and unfamiliar since emigrating with Dad from Zimbabwe. And now she faces yet another challenge. I have learned a great deal from her about tenacity and am grateful for her ongoing support and prayers for me and my family.

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Abstract

Over the course of 2013, a trio of important Western donors unexpectedly announced major redirections of their aid spending trajectories: Australia abandoned a decade-long aid spending expansion; the United Kingdom (UK) became the first G20 country to achieve the 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) aid spending target; and the Netherlands abandoned the 0.7% target after having met or exceeded it for almost four decades. Motivated by this puzzling set of decisions, this thesis responds to the question: why do states change the trajectory of their aid policy?

The existing frameworks offered by the International Relations literature are unable to satisfactorily explain why three similar states would make contemporaneous choices about the trajectory of their aid policy that were both at odds with expectations and divergent from one another. The key weakness of existing literature is its framing around the search for a single driving explanation located at a single level of analysis—either the domestic or international levels. In turn, this thesis attributes this failure to an inability, both methodological and conceptual, to understand the role of individuals in aid policy change and how they handle the competing pressures upon them.

In response, this thesis makes two major moves. First, it appropriates insights from the Foreign Policy Analysis subliterature to build a multilevel framework for reconstructing aid policy decisionmaking episodes. The multilevel framework is used to reconstruct a series of six individual aid policy decisionmaking episodes (two in each case study country) as a basis for understanding why these states decided to reorient their aid spending trajectories. The reconstruction process led to the most important empirical finding of this study: that states change the trajectory of their aid policy when powerful individual political actors pay sustained attention to aid policy issues.

The second move is to draw on the agenda-setting literature to develop a theory of how individual political actors influence the aid-giving behaviour of states. This required clarifying the powerful incentives that usually prevent individual political actors from devoting their scarce attention to aid issues, before identifying circumstances where this tendency is overcome. The actor-specific theory of aid policy change advanced by the thesis incorporates two explanatory mechanisms—decider salience and aid salience shocks. Together, these mechanisms map the attentiveness of individual political actors to aid issues over time. Decider salience explains the top-down, individual actor-driven process by which aid issues reach the political agenda, while aid salience shocks conceptualise the momentum for policy change that emerges once they do.

To demonstrate the utility of these mechanisms, this thesis uses them to organise accounts of aid policy change in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands. Interrogating a state's aid policy choices from an actor-specific perspective, rather than the actor-general perspective of existing frameworks, generates new understandings of what factors influence aid policy change and how they do so. This thesis finds that the agency of powerful individual actors is crucial in initiating and sustaining aid policy change. For example, one must understand Prime Minister David Cameron's personal commitment to the 0.7% target to explain the UK's aid expansion. Yet at the same time, the thesis finds that key domestic and international factors operate to either impede or reinforce the momentum for change. In the case of the UK, momentum towards the 0.7% target was reinforced by a powerful development constituency, a series of institutional path dependencies, and the ascendancy of the moderate faction within the Conservative Party who adopted a relatively internationalist approach to global engagement.

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Glossary

**An asterisk denotes a term that has been contributed and developed by this thesis.*

Actor-general theory	Theory that focuses “on the state as a unitary actor and systemic as well as relational variables as determinants of action” (Hudson and Vore 1995:210).
Actor-specific theory	Theory that is based on the argument that “all that occurs between nations and across nations is grounded in human decision makers acting singly or in groups” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 1). Actor-specific theory is “concrete, contextual and complex” (Hudson 2005, 14).
*Aid salience shock	An instance of an aid policy issue reaching the political agenda and staying on it for a sustained period of time. An aid salience shocks therefore describes a prolonged disturbance in the usual degree of attention paid to aid issues by powerful political actors.
Aid policy	The distinct subset of a state’s foreign policy that is concerned with questions about why, how, where and on what to expend its Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributions.
Aid policy system	The institutional setting within which aid policy decisionmaking occurs in a given state.
Aid policy decision	The output of a process of deliberation which is primarily concerned with how a state expends its ODA budget.
Aid policy decisionmaking episode	A series of linked decisionmaking processes leading to an aid policy decision .
*Decider Salience	The degree to which an individual political actor is personally motivated to devote serious and sustained attention to an issue.
Decision Unit	An individual or group of individuals within government “with the ability to commit the resources of the society and, when faced with a problem, the authority to make a decision that cannot be reversed” (M. G. Hermann 2001, 48).

Development Constituency	“[T]he network of actors active in shaping and/or implementing development cooperation programs” in a given country (Horký and Lightfoot 2012, 17).
Framing	The activity of “select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient [by communicating] in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993, 52).
Individual Decisionmaker	An person who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) has some degree of involvement in an aid policy decisionmaking episode and: either b) has the authority (or has been delegated the authority) to act in the name of the state with reference to the decision at hand (R. C. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002a, 59), or; c) has a role in supporting or assisting an actor who has the authority (or has been delegated the authority) to act in the name of the state.
International Aid Regime	The “broadly accepted standards of international behaviour” (Florini 1996, 363) concerning international aid provision.
Issue Area	A distinct domain of policymaking.
Issue Area Characteristics	Those characteristics and dynamics that distinguish a distinct domain of policymaking from another.
Issue Salience	The relative importance or significance that an actor (not necessarily an individual actor) ascribes to a given issue on the political agenda (Oppermann and de Vries 2011, 3).
Media Agenda	The list of issues to which the media devote their attention.
National Identity	“[A] basic worldview, combined with ideas about the type of national image a nation aspires to, as well as a sense of the values represented by the nation” (van der Veen 2011, 28).
*Personal Salience Profile	The way an individual political actor personally orders the importance of various issues at a point in time.
Political Agenda	The list of issues to which political actors, and the people closely associated with them, devote their attention ¹ .

¹ This definition is an amalgam of the definitions advanced by Kingdon (1995, 3) and Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014b, 1).

Principal	In relation to an aid policy decisionmaking episode, the principle is the highest-ranking member of a Government with formal responsibility for aid policy.
Public Agenda	The list of issues to which the public devote their attention.
*Salience Attachment	A process where an aid policy issue becomes increasingly identified with, or symbolically linked to, another more salient issue over time as a result of framing by political actors.
*Salience Sweet Spot	The idea that aid policymaking (especially around aid spending) operates at an optimal level of political importance (salience)—very low, but not exceedingly so—for becoming a site of conflict amongst political elites. The issue area characteristic of aid mean aid policy issues often become a ‘blank screen’ onto which ideological, factional, political, or personal conflicts are projected.
Strategic level foreign policy	Strategic level foreign policy “is made as a series of commitments and attitudes on the relations between a society and the outside world, usually expounded in general policy statements and ministerial speeches” (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 22). The strategic level of foreign policymaking features the active involvement of senior individual political actors considering ‘big picture’ questions. I consider the ‘strategic level’ of <i>aid policy</i> to predominantly entail questions regarding the strategy, size, structure, and shape of a given state’s aid program.

Political attention is scarce, and it is consequential.

Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014

1 Introduction

Over the course of 2013, a trio of important traditional, Western donors—Australia, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands—announced major redirections in their aid spending trajectories. In each case, these announcements were unexpected and at odds with recent political and historical trends. This thesis explores and explains these decisions as a way of engaging with a broader puzzle in the International Relations² literature: why do states redirect their foreign policy? (C. F. Hermann 1990). This introductory chapter overviews the way I responded to this problem, outlining the thesis' approach and previewing the argument it prosecutes, the research findings it generates, and the contributions it makes. To begin, however, I present three vignettes to introduce the empirical puzzles that this project emerged in response to.

At a press conference on 5 September, just two days before polls were scheduled to open in Australia's federal election, then-Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey announced that the Coalition would cut aid spending by \$4.5 billion if they won Government. This shock announcement marked the end of a dramatic decade-long expansion that saw Australia's aid spending increase by over 80% in real terms. Until Hockey's election-eve revelation, it had been widely assumed that the bipartisan commitment to raise aid spending to 0.5% of Gross National Income (GNI) known as the 'Golden Consensus' would hold.

Only four months earlier, in May, and under a Labor government, Australia was on track to becoming the world's 6th largest donor (Howes 2013b) and its independent aid agency, AusAID³, was lauded in an international review (OECD DAC 2013; R. Davies 2013a). In June, Australia's first cabinet-level Minister for International Development was appointed. As late as August, during the election campaign, informed observers were anticipating that the major political parties would maintain existing policy trends (R. Davies 2013c). Yet Hockey's announcement triggered a sudden and dramatic reversal of Australia's aid spending trajectory, sending aid

² In accordance with convention, I capitalise 'International Relations' throughout this thesis when referring to the discipline. When 'international relations' is rendered in lowercase, it refers to interactions between states.

³ AusAID is the acronym of the now-former Australian Agency for International Development.

spending levels plummeting from an historic peak in 2012 to where, just four years later, Australia's aid to GNI ratio reached an all-time low⁴.

2013 was also turning point in the trajectory of the United Kingdom's aid spending. On 20 March, Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne confirmed that the UK would spend 0.7% of GNI on aid for the first time in history, capping a steep aid spending expansion that made the UK the first G8 country to reach this target⁵. Osborne's budget speech initiated a new phase of UK aid spending, which has been maintained at 0.7% of GNI since.

While Conservative Party leader David Cameron had promised since 2006 to reach the 0.7% target by 2013, few observers expected him to keep his word, especially once he became Prime Minister in 2010. The Global Financial Crisis (GFC) had plunged the UK into a deep recession in 2008 and Cameron's promise to save the country from Labour's profligacy required him to inflict savage cuts to spending. To this end, Cameron oversaw a Spending Review at the outset of his Prime Ministership that cut departmental budgets by an average of 19% over four years as part of a plan to address the UK's ballooning budget deficit (H. M. Treasury 2010b, 17). Surprisingly, the aid budget was protected from these cuts—'ring-fenced' from the process alongside the health budget.

Yet by 2013, as the date for handing down the budget approached, not only had these spending cuts failed to rein in the budget deficit, but the UK faced the very real prospect of a 'triple-dip' recession. Increasing aid spending towards 0.7% in such circumstances struck most observers as politically inconceivable. Not only had public opinion turned decidedly against the idea of increasing aid, the prospect incensed the right-wing of Cameron's Conservative Party and provided constant anti-Cameron ammunition for the tabloids. And yet, despite this array of political obstacles, the Cameron-Clegg Coalition Government kept its 0.7% promise, despite renegeing on others.

Just weeks after Osborne confirmed the UK would become the newest member of the select '0.7% club' of donors, the Netherlands confirmed it would rescind its longstanding membership. Participation in this club had symbolised Dutch leadership in international development since

⁴ Unless otherwise indicated, aid spending figures quoted in this thesis are from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and accessed via the OECD.Stat database. DAC figures record Australia's 2016 Official Development Assistance (ODA) to GNI ratio as 0.25%, equal lowest in its history (alongside 2001, 2003, 2004 and 2005). However, figures used by the Australian Government align with the Australian fiscal year (which runs from 1 July to 30 June), rather than the calendar year figures of the DAC. Australia's ODA to GNI ratio for the 2016-17 *fiscal year*—0.22%—was the lowest in history.

⁵ Germany reached the 0.7% of GNI spending mark in 2016.

1975, when it first achieved the 0.7% milestone. However, on 5 April 2013, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs published *A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment, A World to Gain*, a manifesto which included a blueprint for reducing foreign aid spending from 0.7% to 0.55% of GNI by 2017 (MFA 2013, 60)⁶. With this, *A World to Gain* overturned four decades of policy tradition.

Dutch adherence to the 0.7% target had become such a matter of faith—not just to the Dutch themselves, but to the international community—that the decision to abandon the 0.7% came as a shock, even for development sector insiders. The sense of shock was heightened given a ‘purple coalition’ had formed following the 2012 election. This political arrangement, which paired the centre-right Liberals and the centre-left, social democratic Labour Party was predicted to mark the return of traditional, centrist, consensus-based decisionmaking in the Netherlands after a decade of political upheaval. It was assumed that, in this relatively tranquil political environment, the 0.7% target would be maintained. Yet one of the most decisive first steps taken by the new Rutte II cabinet was to abandon the 0.7% target.

§§§

1.1 The Research Question

One year. Three states. Three unanticipated and virtually simultaneous decisions to enact major aid policy change. Furthermore, these three traditional Western donors made choices about the trajectory of their aid policy that were not only at odds with expectations, given the politics and historical trends in each country, but also *diverged* from one another. Motivated by this puzzle, this thesis responds to the following question:

Why do states change the trajectory of their aid policy?

For the purposes of this study, I consider a state’s aid policy to be the distinct subset of its foreign policy that is concerned with questions about why, how, where and on what to expend its

⁶ After dropping below the 0.7% threshold in 2013 and 2014, Dutch aid spending returned to 0.75% in 2015, before dropping under 0.7% again in 2016. The brief return to 0.7% is an aberration that is accounted for largely by the fact that domestic spending on supporting refugees can be counted as ODA under current DAC rules. Dutch contributions under this component increased dramatically in 2015. So, while technically Dutch aid spending once again exceeded the 0.7% threshold, the actual volume of spending available for what can broadly be categorised as ‘development purposes’ has been drastically reduced.

Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributions. While I acknowledge that ODA is not a perfect measure, it remains the best readily-available proxy for a (DAC-member) state's 'aid' budget⁷. For reasons of simplicity, I use the term 'aid' as a proxy for ODA throughout this thesis. Furthermore, I consider 'aid' to be synonymous with the terms 'foreign aid', 'development cooperation', 'international development', 'development aid' and 'development assistance' (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 11). Although I acknowledge that each of these terms has subtly different meanings or intimations, these distinctions are not important enough to the aims of this study to persuade me to deviate from the clear preference in the determinants of aid literature to use the term 'foreign aid'⁸. That said, in the empirical chapters of the thesis, the language I use tends to reflect the particular terminology favoured in each jurisdiction. In my experience, 'foreign aid' is the term favoured in Australia, 'international development' is most regularly used in the UK, while 'development cooperation' is preferred in the Netherlands. While on the subject of terminology, I include definitions for terms I use regularly, or that have contested meanings, in the Glossary. I indicate a term that is included in the Glossary by rendering it in bold typeface the first time it appears in each chapter (including in this Introduction).

It is important at this early stage, as I undertake 'boundary work' to convey how I approached the thesis question, to acknowledge that my decision to specifically defining aid as an element of a states' foreign policy is potentially controversial. This is because equating aid as a component (or *tool* or *instrument*) of foreign policy has taken on normative connotations. Supporters of aid often object to aid being classified as a 'tool of foreign policy' because this suggests accepting the premise of the 'foreign policy approach' originally advocated by Morgenthau (1962)—that aid should be deployed to secure national interests. To be clear, my equating aid as a tool of foreign policy is a purely technical stance, not a normative one⁹. Aid policy *is* foreign policy precisely because it constitutes an action of a state "directed in whole or part outside of the boundaries of the state" (Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 19).

⁷ ODA is precisely defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) to enable comparison of ODA flows across member states. However, for the immediate purposes of this paper, ODA can be considered as the voluntary transfer of resources from one state to another for the purposes of promoting development. This approach preserves compatibility with a variety of literatures and scholars who employ a variety of different terms with essentially the same meaning.

⁸ As I highlight I later in this chapter, and detail further in chapter two, I consider this thesis to a contribution to the qualitative comparative aid policy literature (see Table 2.B). The five most recent key studies of this literature use the term 'foreign aid'. Four of these use the term in the title of the book (Van Belle, Rioux, and Potter 2004; Lancaster 2007a; van der Veen 2011; Lundsgaarde 2013).

⁹ For an extended discussion on this position, see Day (2016, 650).

Conceptualising aid policy as a component element of a state's foreign policy provides a means to interrogate a shortcoming of the International Relations literature: its limited ability to explain why states choose to reorient their foreign policy (C. F. Hermann 1990). Even the subfield of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), which focuses on decisionmaking processes, tells us "little about the sources and conditions that give rise to significant alteration to state foreign policy" (Alden and Aran 2017, 125). In light of this, the cases introduced in the opening vignettes are of "special interest" to scholars of foreign policy because they are each examples of "[c]hanges that mark a reversal or, at least, a profound redirection of a country's foreign policy" (C. F. Hermann 1990, 4). Furthermore, the fact these cases involve redirecting the same *type* of foreign policy heightens the likelihood of advancing theoretical understanding about how change proceeds. "While it might be impossible to formulate a viable theory that would purport to explain all types of foreign policy," argues Jervis (1976, 18), "there is good reason to think that theoretical progress would be easier to achieve if the ambition was limited to explaining certain types of foreign policy." In short, as the title of the thesis conveys, my 'paying attention to aid', is a means of engaging with the broader problem of explaining foreign policy change.

This is not to deny that there is not a growing need to pay attention to aid in its own right. Foreign aid has rapidly become an important feature of international relations, despite only emerging as a distinct element of foreign policy relatively recently (Picard and Groelsema 2008, 7; Hook 1995, xi, 19; Firth 2005, 273; Lancaster 2007a, 5). It is instructive that Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands each spend considerably more on aid than they do on diplomacy¹⁰. Moreover, global aid spending is increasing. Over the last two decades, the members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)—historically considered the representative 'club' of traditional donors—have expanded their expenditure on official development assistance (ODA) by 134% in real terms, from US\$61.32 billion in 1997 to US\$143.33 billion in 2016¹¹. The proportion of Gross National Income (GNI) that DAC members devote to aid has also expanded by 52%, from 0.21% of GNI in 1997 to 0.32% in 2016, while the volume of aid provided by non-DAC members has also been rising dramatically. Quite simply, as van der Veen (2011, 13) has argued, "[t]he sheer volume of aid makes development assistance a topic of considerable importance..." In summary, in both theoretical and empirical terms, there is a pressing need for aid policy to be studied as "a *sui generis* tool of contemporary foreign policy" (Hook 1995, xiii; see also Potter 1980).

¹⁰ For example, just prior to its demise, AusAID's budget was roughly four times larger than that of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

¹¹ Constant 2015 prices. Only a very minor component of this dramatic expansion is accounted for by the expansion of DAC member countries since 1997 (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia). ODA from these new DAC-member states constituted only 0.86% of total DAC ODA in 2016.

One final piece of 'boundary work' is required before moving on to situate my study within the International Relations literature. This thesis is limited to examining what Gyngell and Wesley (2007, Chapter 2) identify as the 'strategic level' of foreign policy. Strategic level foreign policy, according to Gyngell and Wesley (2007, 22), "is made as a series of commitments and attitudes on the relations between a society and the outside world, usually expounded in general policy statements and ministerial speeches". The strategic level domain of foreign policymaking features the active involvement of senior political actors who consider 'big picture' questions. I consider the 'strategic level' of aid policy to predominantly entail questions regarding the strategy, size, structure, and shape of a given state's aid program. As such, aid policy decisionmaking at the strategic level involves actors with the authority to act in the name of the state (R. C. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002, 59) answering four questions: why do we give aid? (strategy); how much aid will we give? (size); how will we organise our aid (structure) and how and where will we spend our aid? (shape). These aspects of strategic-level aid policy decisionmaking can be summarised as the 'four S's'.

While I engage with each of the four S's during this thesis, one way I have limited the scope of this project in my research design is by focussing primarily on the question of size. I deliberately framed how I set up the puzzle at the outset of this Introduction in terms of aid *spending* changes. Yet those familiar with these aid policy changes will be aware that the spending changes announced in 2013 in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands were all accompanied by significant changes in other strategic dimensions. In Australia, cuts to aid were followed almost immediately by the decision to integrate Australia's aid agency, AusAID, into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), thereby ending four decades of autonomous existence. The abandonment of the 0.7% target in the Netherlands was also accompanied by machinery of government changes. Moreover, each of the states in question conducted serious rationalisation exercises in the post-GFC period where they dramatically reduced the number of partner countries supported by their respective aid programs.

While not ignoring non-spending strategic level changes, I focus on aid spending for five reasons. First, the size of the aid budget the aspect of aid policy which generates the most media and public interest. Second, a state's level of aid spending is accepted widely accepted proxy for how important a government considers aid to be (even though the success of its policy is clearly dependent on many other factors than aid volume, not least aid quality) (Hook and Rumsey 2016, 61). Third, the 0.7% target clearly still exerts a powerful normative hold on the actions of states, as my accounts of aid policy change demonstrate. Fourth, for the three reasons just

provided, the size of the aid budget is generally the strategic aid policy issue political actors care most about. And fifth, defining change in the other dimensions of strategic aid policy is considerably more difficult. In summary, I made the assessment that a focus on aid spending was likely to provide the most explanatory purchase within the complex and difficult terrain of aid policy change.

1.2 The Shortcomings of the Literature and my Response

Beyond the immediate empirical motivation of explaining the puzzling choices outlined above, two distinct shortcomings of the International Relations literature commend this question as one worthy of sustained investigation. I have already raised the first shortcoming of the literature: a difficulty to explain when and why states redirect their foreign policy (C. F. Hermann 1990; see also Alden and Aran 2017). The second shortcoming relates to the inability of the International Relations literature to decisively explain why states give aid, despite having grappled with the question for well over half a century.

A sense of confoundment has always overshadowed the International Relations scholarship on aid. In 1962, Hans Morgenthau (1962, 301) observed that “of the seeming and real innovations which the modern age has introduced into the practice of foreign policy, none has proved more baffling to both understanding and action than foreign aid”. Later that decade, Morgenthau’s fellow Realist Kenneth Waltz (1967, 185) conceded that foreign aid was “something new under the sun” and defied existing assumptions about state behaviour. A surge of scholarly interest in aid during the late 1970s and early 1980s shed important new light on *what* factors led states to provide aid, but failed to account for *why*, *how*, or *when* these factors impacted aid policy. By the late 1990s, Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor (1998, 295) recognised that the scholarship on foreign aid was trapped in an “intellectual vacuum”.

This assessment has continued to be invoked by contemporary aid scholars surveying the state of the ‘determinants of aid literature’—the body of scholarship concerned with “which donor gives to which recipient and why” (Alesina and Dollar 2000, 34) and the subliterate most relevant to this thesis¹². One such scholar, A. Maurits van der Veen (2011, 2), concedes that “the factors shaping foreign aid remain ill-understood”. Ahmed, Marcoux, Russell and Tierney (2011, 6) concur, acknowledging that there is “little consensus in the aid literature concerning which

¹² Alesina and Dollar (2000, 34) view the literature on foreign aid as comprising two components. As I have noted, the determinants of aid literature, which I am concerned with here, considers “which donor gives to which recipient and why”. The other component “studies the effects of foreign aid on the receiving countries.” This question, while extremely important, is outside the scope of this thesis.

factors most influence changes in donors' aid effort" before adding add that, "[e]ven when scholars agree on which variables matter most they frequently disagree on the precise effects that those variables will have." More than five decades after baffling Morgenthau, the core question the determinants of aid literature grapples with continues to perplex scholars.

This thesis contends that the twin shortcomings of the International Relations literature just explicitly referenced derive from a shared flaw; a reticence to examine state behaviour through a sufficiently wide lens capable of capturing sources of change originating from within *all* levels of analysis—individual, domestic and international¹³. My full diagnosis of the malaise that afflicts the 'determinants of aid' literature is documented in chapter 2. In summary, I describe how the major frameworks to emerge from this literature are incapable of answering the question this thesis asks because they are anchored in a single level of analysis. The historically dominant selfish-selfless framework prioritises international factors. The chief alternative framework, the domestic determinants framework, seeks to correct this weakness by focussing on domestic factors. Yet in doing so, this approach suffers from the very same problem it was trying to rectify—prejudging from which level the most important explanatory factors originate from. In summary, the key existing frameworks disagree about whether international factors or domestic factors should be prioritised. Furthermore, these frameworks both ignore individual factors.

By focussing unduly on factors originating from a single level of analysis, the existing frameworks generate accounts of aid policy change that are frustratingly incomplete, like trying to read a novel with missing pages. Only by actively considering factors originating from all levels of analysis—simultaneously—can a more satisfying narrative be created. To develop more complete explanations of aid policy change in Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands, I engaged the FPA subliterate to build an integrated (i.e. multilevel) aid policy decisionmaking framework. In chapter 3, I describe how this 'recapturing scheme' is powered by the idea that the individual decisionmaker acts as the "locus of theoretical integration across levels of analysis" (V. M. Hudson 2002, 5).

The integrated aid policy decisionmaking framework functions as a tool to guide the reconstruction of a series of aid policy decisionmaking episodes (the six episodes are specified further below). Yet these reconstructions did not, in themselves, constitute answers to the question this thesis poses. Rather, they functioned as an access point for understanding aid

¹³ For reasons that will become more evident in chapter 2, I adopt the common three-tiered framework advanced by Waltz (1959) when referring to 'levels of analysis' during this thesis. In doing so, I acknowledge there are alternative approaches, notably the divisions advocated by Hudson, who identifies nine major levels of analysis (V. M. Hudson 2014, 34).

policy decisionmaking dynamics and produced the amalgam of empirical material from which my answer emerged. To build a more generalised argument from this raw material to explain why states change the trajectory of their aid policy, I also drew on the agenda-setting literature. As I document in chapter 4, I appropriated concepts from the agenda-setting literature to construct a pair of explanatory mechanisms that explain the divergent aid policy choices made by Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands in 2013. As I preview in the next section, these explanatory mechanisms are tools that I used to help explain the story of aid policy change in my cases.

1.3 The Argument

I answer the question this thesis poses by advancing an **actor-specific theory** of aid policy change. Existing frameworks for understanding why states give aid are built on **actor-general theory**. These frameworks ‘ground’ their analysis at the level of the state. In contrast, I explicitly identify the human decisionmaker, rather than the state, as the “the point of theoretical intersection between the primary determinants of state behaviour” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 3). In chapter 4, I explain how this theoretical move allows me to address the deficiencies of the determinants of aid literature. Most important, it facilitates the development of multilevel explanations of aid policy change; beginning with the human decisionmaker does not prevent the integration of domestic and international factors into explanations of aid policy change—it enables it. This is fundamentally because “decision makers can take their cue from any level of analysis” (Welch 2005, 23).

The central argument of this thesis is that states change the trajectory of their aid policy when powerful individual political actors pay sustained attention to aid policy issues. The theory of aid policy change I advance encapsulates this argument via two explanatory mechanisms, decider salience and aid salience shocks. Together, these mechanisms are designed to map the attentiveness of political actors to aid issues in a state over time, thereby allowing for the policy change process such political attention promotes to be identified, traced, and explained.

While the notion that “serious policy change” (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2006a, 959) occurs when political actors increase the attention they pay to an issue is well-established in the agenda setting literature, the implications of this for aid policy dynamics have not been explored. Crucial to the agenda setting literature is role of the **political agenda**, which I define in this study as the list of issues to which political actors, and people closely associated with

them, devote their attention¹⁴. ‘Getting on’ the political agenda is a precondition for policy change to occur in an issue area, including aid. As Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014b, 6) relate, “the selection of issues that deserve political attention determines all further steps in the political process”, including major changes in spending allocations.

Issues typically reach the political agenda via a ‘bottom up’ process reflecting the public’s priorities, as political actors in democracies are incentivised to devote their limited time and attention to issues that are also deemed important by the public (Bevan and Jennings 2014, 39). Aid issues, however, are unable to ‘reach’ the political agenda in this manner. While the public may notionally *support* the provision of aid, voters do not view aid as important *relative* to other priorities. In short, the low issue salience of aid prevents aid issues from reaching the political agenda via the regular ‘bottom up’ process. (Chapter 4 includes an extended defence of the claim that aid has low issue salience—see section 4.4). This means that, for aid issues to reach the political agenda, they must do so via a ‘top down’, actor-driven process.

The explanatory mechanism of decider salience makes sense of the unique way which aid issues reach the political agenda. **Decider salience** refers to the degree to which an individual political actor is personally motivated to devote serious and sustained attention to an issue. Only once an individual political actor’s level of decider salience crosses a threshold level will they be willing to expend the necessary political capital to put (and then keep) a low salience issue like aid on the political agenda. Furthermore, while exceeding the decider salience threshold is a necessary condition for getting aid issues on the political agenda, it is not sufficient. The relevant political actor must also possess the required authority or influence to get a low salience issue onto the political agenda, a condition only fulfilled by powerful individual political actors.

What motivates a powerful individual to invest their limited time and attention on aid issues? According to my research, they do so for one of two reasons: either they maintain a strong personal interest in aid, and seek to change aid policy in accordance with their policy preferences; or they identify aid policy as a politically useful proxy to demonstrate or signal their position on a more salient political issue or position. In short, aid issues exceed the threshold level of decider salience when an individual actor seeks to effect policy change for direct or indirect reasons.

¹⁴ This definition amalgamates definitions advanced by Kingdon (1995, 3) and Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014b, 1).

I refer to an instance of an aid policy issue *reaching* the political agenda for a *sustained* period as an **aid salience shock**. During an aid salience shock, political actors devote more attention to aid than is usually the case, disturbing the default dynamics of the aid policymaking subsystem¹⁵. Once an aid salience shock has been triggered, heightened attention is afforded to aid policy issues until the desired policy change is either achieved or thwarted, or until the political actor responsible for triggering the aid salience shock loses their ability to influence the political agenda.

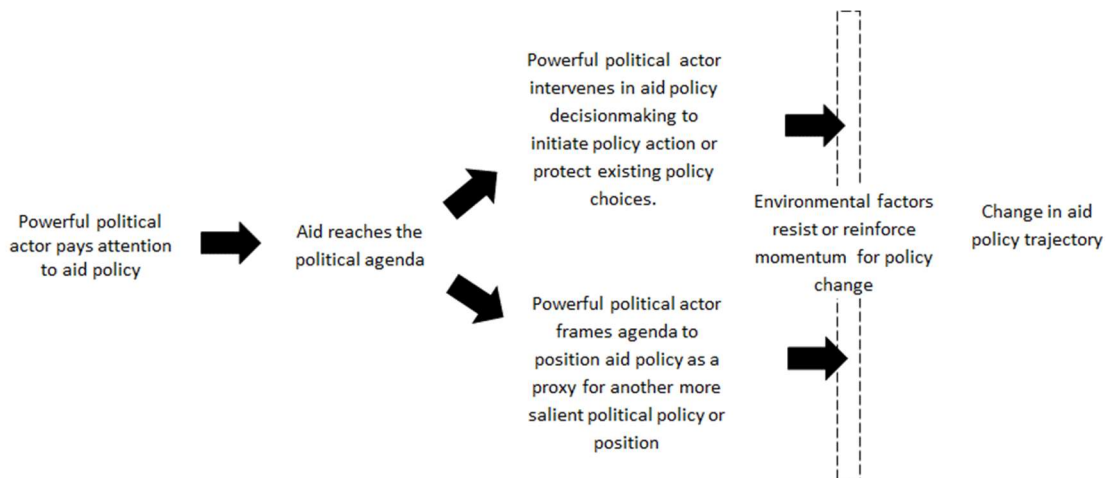
Aid salience shocks function as explanatory mechanisms once they are conceptualised as a force which acts to ‘push’ or ‘pull’ the trajectory of aid policy towards a policy objective (the examples documented in this thesis primarily function to either increase or decrease aid spending). Just like physical forces, aid salience shocks are vectors; they have a magnitude and a direction. Additionally, more than one aid salience shock may operate at any given time, potentially reinforcing, or cancelling out, momentum for aid policy change in a state. Tracing an aid salience shock as it ‘travels through’ an aid policy subsystem over time highlights the factors which act to impede or assist aid policy change. In this sense, aid salience shocks function as the conceptual equivalent of tracer dye used in medical diagnoses¹⁶. Aid salience shocks, like tracer dyes, help illuminate how a system is functioning, despite not being a constituent part of that system.

The process by which aid policy change is achieved varies depending on the initiating actor’s motivation, allowing for a two-fold typology of aid salience shocks. When the initiating actor’s motivation is to change aid policy in accordance with their policy preferences, they effect change by intervening repeatedly in aid policy decisionmaking processes to initiate policy action or protect existing policy choices. I refer to this as a direct (Type I) aid salience shock. On the other hand, when an initiating political actor’s primary motivation is to use aid policy change as a means for achieving another political end, they deploy **framing** to change how aid is perceived. This is as an Indirect (Type II) aid salience shock. These alternative pathways leading to aid policy change are illustrated in Figure 1.A below.

¹⁵ Note that just because an issue reaches the political agenda does not mean it becomes suddenly more visible to the public. In fact, for low salience issues, it is much more likely that political actors prefer that the public are kept unaware of where they are directing their attention.

¹⁶ The metaphor of a tracer dye is adapted from Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014b, 9), who deploy it to convey the value of “tracking attention to issues through time to learn about political systems”.

Figure 1.A: Aid Salience Shocks as Pathways to Aid Policy Change



As I demonstrate in the empirical component of thesis, the explanatory mechanisms of decider salience and aid salience shocks function as devices around which to construct multilevel explanations of aid policy change. By joining up the “discrete and disconnected pieces of the aid puzzle” (Hook 1993, 44), these mechanisms generate more complete accounts of aid policy change than existing alternatives, helping make sense of why Australia, the UK and the Netherlands made divergent aid policy choices in 2013.

1.4 Research Design

As the opening vignettes conveyed, this project emerged in response to a trio of confounding aid policy announcements made over the course of six months in 2013. These announcements signalled a definitive policy choice had been made by these states regarding their aid spending trajectories: Australia would abandon its decade-long spending ramp-up to 0.5%; the Netherlands would abandon its 40-year long policy of spending at least 0.7%; and the UK would realise its promise to achieve the 0.7% target and maintain this level of expenditure on aid.

This project was designed to explain these ‘real world’ events by asking about their causes (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 42). In a methodological sense, the driving objective was to uncover “the many and complex causes of a specific outcome (Y) [i.e. aid policy change] and not so much [to examine] the effects of a specific cause (X)” (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 80). In methodological terms my case selection is Y-centred, with this study adopting a ‘causes of

effects’ approach, rather than an ‘effects of causes’ approach (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 41)¹⁷. This is typical of FPA scholarship, which generally seeks to explain why a given foreign policy decision was made.

As the basis for understanding why Australia, the UK and the Netherlands changed the trajectory of their aid policy, this research reconstructed six aid policy decisionmaking episodes, two in each of the three case study countries (see Table 1.A below)¹⁸. My starting point was to reconstruct the decisionmaking episodes that led to the ‘definitive declaratory statement on aid policy’ produced by each government responsible for the trio of announcements that triggered the research—the Abbott, Cameron-Clegg and Rutte II government’s respectively (Series II). To provide for temporal comparison, I also reconstructed the decisionmaking episodes leading to the definitive declaratory statement on aid policy produced by the *predecessor* governments to those above—that is, for the Gillard, Brown, and Rutte I governments respectively (Series I). Beyond helping to reveal change over time, this move adds methodological value because in each country, the government in Series I is replaced by one of a different ideological orientation in Series II.

The chief methodological contribution of this thesis is the development and application of an integrated ‘Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework’. The framework allowed the six decisionmaking episodes summarised in Table 1.A below to be reconstructed in a comparable manner. The framework is ‘integrated’ in the sense that it incorporates potential factors shaping aid policy decisionmaking from *all* levels of analysis—international, domestic, *and* individual.

Reconstructing these episodes provided a ‘way in’ to discovering aid policy decisionmaking dynamics, revealing the competing constraints political actors face when making aid policy. This process uncovered potentially relevant causal ‘threads’ which could then be followed back and forward through time using causal process tracing methodology to generate theoretically-

¹⁷ Scholars working within the ‘quantitative culture’ operate using an ‘effects of causes’ approach. Such scholars prize the controlled experiment and seek to “estimate the average effect of an independent variable of interest” (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 41). In contrast, as Blatter and Haverland (2012, 99) point out, “[s]mall-N research with an emphasis on causal-process tracing does not rely on the co-variation of variables across cases to draw causal inferences”.

¹⁸ I also considered examining Canada, Norway, and Switzerland as potential alternate case study countries. Amongst these alternative cases, Canada was the most compelling, as Canada’s then-government also surprisingly announced a major aid policy change in 2013 (R. Davies 2013d). It confirmed that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), which had been independent for 45 years, would be subsumed into the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) (Mackrael 2013). Ultimately, the major reason for choosing to examine aid policy making in Australia, the Netherlands and the UK relates to the fact these policy changes, although incorporating other aspects, were primarily expressed at the political level in terms of a sudden departure from, or realisation of (in the case of the UK), a long-agreed bipartisan spending target. Practical considerations also played a role, particularly as having two cases in Europe minimised fieldwork travel expenses, allowing for repeat trips to each case study country.

orientated narratives (George and Bennett 2005, 205) that explain what factors influence changes in aid policy. As I followed these threads by “immersing myself in the details of the case[s]” (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Loc 527), I inductively began to appreciate the importance of agenda dynamics in triggering major aid policy change¹⁹. This in turn led me to leverage the agenda-setting literature to inform the construction of explanatory mechanisms that, by conceptualising how and why aid policy changes, respond directly to the question posed by this thesis.

Table 1.A: Aid Policy Decisionmaking Episodes Reconstructed in this Study

	State	Episode	Defining Declaratory Aid Policy	Publication Date	Government
Series I	Australia	AUS I	An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results	July 2011	Gillard Labour Government
	UK	UK I	Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future	July 2009	Brown Labour Government
	Netherlands	NED I	Letter to the House of Representatives presenting the spearheads of development cooperation policy	March 2011	Rutte I (Centre-right Coalition)
Series II	Australia	AUS II	Australian aid: Promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability	June 2014	Abbott Government
	UK	UK II	Spending Review 2010	October 2010	Cameron Coalition Government
	Netherlands	NED II	A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment	April 2013	Rutte II (‘Purple’ Coalition)

In building the accounts of aid policy change presented in Part II of this thesis, this research draws on a wide range of contemporary data sources, including speeches, government reports, memoirs, diaries, biographies, newspapers, magazines, parliamentary reports, blogs, journal articles and books (where kindle versions of books have been used that don’t include page numbers, ‘locations’ are recorded in the in-text citations, denoted by ‘Loc’ following surnames of author/s and date of publication). Most notably, this research also draws on over 40 hours of interview material collected during over fifty formal interviews, including with many individuals who directly participated in one or more of the six decisionmaking episodes that were reconstructed. These interviews were conducted under the auspices of ANU Human Ethics

¹⁹ Leaving space for inductive insights is a key feature of causal process tracing (Bennett and Checkel 2015a; Blatter and Haverland 2012, 30).

Protocol Number 2014/426. A list of interviewees can be found in Annex 1. Interviewees have explicitly consented to the use of all the interview data that appears in this thesis.

Crucially, given the importance of political actors to this study, this research draws on interviews with eight politicians who held aid policy-related appointments during the period in question. This includes interviews with the former Parliamentary Secretary for Development Cooperation in Australia (Bob McMullen), two former UK Secretaries of State for International Development (Clare Short and Andrew Mitchell) and the former State Secretary for European Affairs and Development Cooperation from the Netherlands (Dr Ben Knapen).

1.5 Research Findings

To demonstrate the plausibility of my theory of aid policy change, I trace the path of a series of aid salience shocks as they ‘travel through’ the aid policy subsystems of Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands (see Table 1.B below). In doing so, a picture emerged of the factors that prove important for shaping strategic level aid policy across each of these cases. Before introducing these factors below, however, I offer previews of how the explanatory mechanisms I propose help explain aid policy change in Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands.

Table 1.B: Aid Salience Shocks Documented in this Study

	#	Name	Key Political Actor/s (position/s)	Type	Timeframe	Impact on Aid \$
Australia	SS1	Rudd aid salience shock	Kevin Rudd (Labor Party Leader, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs)	I	2006-2012	Increase
	SS2	Budget deficit aid salience shock	Tony Abbott (Prime Minister) Joe Hockey (Treasurer)	II	2013-2014	Decrease
	SS3	Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock	Tony Abbott (Liberal Party Leader/Prime Minister) Julie Bishop (Deputy Liberal Leader/Minister for Foreign Affairs)	II	2011-2014	Decrease
United Kingdom	SS4	Short aid salience shock	Clare Short (Shadow/Secretary of State for International Development)	I	1997-2003	Increase
	SS5	Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shock	David Cameron (Conservative Party Leader/ Prime Minister) Andrew Mitchell (Shadow/Secretary of State for International Development)	I	2006-2013	Increase
	SS6	‘Tory modernisation’ aid salience shock	David Cameron (Conservative Party Leader / Prime Minister)	II	2006-2013	Increase
NED	SS7	‘Elite hobby’ aid salience shock	Geert Wilders (Leader of the Party for Freedom, PVV)	II	2008-2012	Decrease

1.5.1 Explaining Aid Policy Change in Australia

Australia's abandonment of the 0.5% target in 2013 must be viewed in relation to the decade-long expansion of that preceded this decision. This expansion was driven by Kevin Rudd, who, while occupying a series of senior political positions—Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Opposition Leader, Prime Minister and subsequently Minister for Foreign Affairs—consistently and deliberately inserted himself into aid policy decisionmaking, driven by his personal belief that Australia's aid spending should increase to 0.5% (SS1). While Rudd's authority ensured he could keep his 'personal project' on the political agenda during this period, his influence also masked the underlying fragility of the 'golden consensus'. Once Rudd resigned, and was no longer capable of protecting the aid budget, a distinct lack of broad political and institutional support for ongoing aid spending increases was exposed, alongside political weakness of the development constituency.

Aid may well have simply receded from the political agenda at this point, with aid spending plateauing or slowly reverting to more politically sustainable levels. Yet from 2013, Australia's aid spending dived twice as rapidly as it had increased. The jarring U-turn in aid spending can be explained by the emergence of two indirect (Type II) aid salience shocks, each of which exerted downward pressure on aid spending. The budget deficit aid salience shock involved Prime Minister Tony Abbott and Treasurer Joe Hockey repeatedly exploiting the political value of framing cuts to aid spending as evidence the Coalition Government was serious about 'fixing' the growing budget deficit (SS2). The Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock saw aid policy become an ideological wedge between the Liberal party's conservative and moderate factions (SS3). The net effect of the co-mingling of these indirect aid saliences shocks was to incentivise the political benefit—both internally (within the Party) and externally (within the public)—of repeatedly cutting aid spending.

1.5.2 Explaining Aid Policy Change in the United Kingdom

In significant ways, the story of aid policy change in the United Kingdom is the reverse of Australia's. Most plainly, a longstanding aid spending target was achieved in the UK, whereas it was abandoned in Australia. The groundwork for accomplishing the 0.7% target was laid by Clare Short. Assisted by the political cover provided by Brown and Blair, Short succeeded in her desire to establish the new Department for International Development (DFID) as a powerful agency focused on poverty reduction (SS4). She also ensured DFID secured substantially increased funding. However, like Rudd, Short relinquished her personal influence over aid policy by resigning.

The UK could maintain its trajectory towards 0.7% post-Short because, unlike in post-Rudd Australia, the ‘forcing direction’ of the subsequent aid salience shocks pushed aid spending higher. The Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shock was initiated by the high decider salience for aid issues of then-Opposition Leader David Cameron and his Shadow Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell. Both men kept aid on the political agenda because they were personally invested in realising the 0.7% target (SS5). At the same time, Cameron saw the political benefit of framing the Conservative Party’s embrace of the 0.7% target as symbolic of the Party’s modernisation (SS6). The momentum created by these two salience shocks, reinforced by a supportive institutional environment and a large and influential development constituency, saw the creation of a ‘virtuous cycle’ toward 0.7%. Even given these favourable conditions, without Cameron’s decisive personal intervention at two critical points during his Prime Ministership, the UK would not have achieved the 0.7% target in 2013.

1.5.3 Explaining Aid Policy Change in the Netherlands

The story of aid policy change in the Netherlands unfolds entirely differently from those in Australia and the UK. Rather than being the product of a combination of aid salience shocks, aid policy change in the Netherlands was driven by a single, powerful indirect (type II) aid salience shock. I argue that Dutch abandonment of the 0.7% target in the Netherlands is a product of Geert Wilders’ framing of aid issues (SS7).

Despite never enjoying formal executive power, Wilders—an iconoclastic populist and the leader of the Party for Freedom (PVV)²⁰—possessed an unprecedented ability to dictate the terms of Dutch political discussion during the period of study. He devoted some of his attention on framing aid as an ‘elite hobby’—a strategy that reinforced his more politically potent anti-immigration, anti-Islam and anti-Europe positions. Critically, Wilders’ powerful reframing of the 0.7% target took place during a period where the notion of Dutch identity was increasingly contested. Over generations, Dutch adherence to 0.7% had become a symbol of Dutch identity, yet as aspects of this identity were eroded, the symbolism of the 0.7% target was liable to being reinterpreted. Wilders knew this and methodically portrayed the 0.7% target as symbolic of the misplaced priorities of an out-of-touch Dutch elite whose behaviour increasingly marginalised ‘ordinary’ Dutch people.

²⁰ PVA is the Dutch acronym for *Partij voor de Vrijheid*.

From the outside, the long-standing Dutch consensus around 0.7% appeared to fracture instantly. This apparent fracturing was in fact the result of a long build-up of pressure exerted by Wilders—pressure that, over time, led the consensus to become exceedingly brittle. To be sure, the pressure applied by Wilders’ ‘elite hobby’ aid salience shock was reinforced by a range of other domestic and international factors, not least the changing international development landscape. Yet without Wilders’ determination to keep aid on the political agenda, it is difficult to envision a scenario whereby abandoning the 0.7% was viewed as good politics by the leading political party.

1.6 Factors Shaping Aid Policy Change

Using decider salience and aid salience shocks to explain aid policy change in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands revealed six specific factors that decisively shaped the policy change process across these states that are largely unexplored in the determinants of aid literature. I examine these factors in detail in chapter 8. It is significant that these six factors, which I briefly outline here, originate from across all levels of analysis.

The key finding emerging from this study is that major aid policy change is driven by senior political figures, usually individuals at the party leader level. As the explanatory mechanisms the thesis constructs convey, powerful individual political actors play a crucial role in both initiating and sustaining momentum for aid policy change. Also at the individual level, this thesis also found that crucial decisions on aid spending are often made by small groups who ultimately control a state’s budget. For example, in the UK, David Cameron’s willingness to twice overrule the objections of his colleagues in the ‘Quad’—which acted as the inner cabinet of the Cameron-Clegg Coalition Government—ensured the UK decided against abandoning the 0.7% target (SS5).

At the domestic level, the strength and character of the development constituency in a state, especially the extent of its political connections, shapes the momentum for policy change. The political sophistication of the UK development constituency helps explain why the UK could achieve, and then maintain, a dramatic increase in aid spending, while the one-dimensional nature of the Australian development constituency meant it was unable to stall the dramatic spending reductions after 2013. One of the more unexpected findings of this thesis is identifying that aid spending became a wedge issue within the dominant centre-right political parties in all three case study countries—the Liberal Party in Australia, the Conservative Party in the UK, and the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)²¹ in the Netherlands. The conservative wings of each of

²¹ CDA is the Dutch acronym for *Christen-Democratisch Appèl*.

these parties favoured cuts to aid spending, while the moderate wings desired aid spending to be maintained or increased. Yet even more important than this was the way the prospect of aid policy change activated factional conflict around other issues. Positioning on aid spending functioned as a proxy for where intraparty factions stood on issues such as party leadership (Australia and the UK), approach to managing the budget deficit (Australia and the UK), the degree of appropriate cooperation with far-right political parties (the Netherlands) and party electoral positioning (UK).

At the international level, I found that the chief ‘standard’ of the international aid regime—the 0.7% target—functioned as a reference point against which domestic political debates occurred. The 0.7% target carried heavy symbolic weight and the burden of this weight shifted over time. This means that deploying the 0.7% target as a political symbol is a double-edged sword for politicians and policymakers. And finally, global power shifts function as prompts for states to reassess how to engage in the world, which activates debates about national identity that flow into the politics of aid.

Together, these factors reveal how the characteristics of the aid policy issue area make aid policy liable to being a site of political contestation. In chapter 8, I develop the notion that aid policy resides in a **‘salience sweet spot’** for engendering elite political conflict. This concept refers to the idea that aid policy is just important enough to make ‘playing politics’ with aid potentially worthwhile, but not so important that the political costs of doing so are prohibitively high. In short, aid policy is uniquely suited to becoming a site of political contestation, with aid policy positions functioning as proxies for broader debates between groups.

1.7 Research Contribution

This thesis advances the study of International Relations through several innovations. This study is the first to examine aid policy decisionmaking dynamics at the strategic level in comparative perspective. It is also the first to reconstruct a series of distinct aid policy decisionmaking episodes in similar manner to the way classic decisionmaking episodes have been examined in the FPA literature, such as the Bay of Pigs Crisis (Janis 1972) and the Cuban Missile Crisis (Allison 1969, 1971). Additionally, this thesis is one of the few studies that sets out to construct an ‘integrated’ explanation of foreign policy choices across three levels of analysis. By focusing on a non-crisis domain of foreign policy and examining non-United States cases, the study moves beyond the subject matter typically associated with FPA. Finally, by tracing “levels of attention to issues within government over time” (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2006a, 959),

this study represents one of the few comparative studies of policy agendas. These innovations position the thesis to make original empirical, methodological, and theoretical contributions to International Relations.

This thesis makes an original *empirical* contribution by providing detailed accounts of recent instances of major aid policy change in Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands. Even now, four years after the decisions were announced, there remains considerable conjecture about why these states dramatically changed the trajectory of their aid spending. Very little academic work has been done to document the details of each case in isolation, much less viewed from a comparative perspective. Furthermore, as just mentioned, this thesis shows how six specific factors that have not been well-considered in the literature to this point influence the aid-giving behaviour of states.

The thesis makes a *methodological* contribution by developing and applying a multilevel 'aid policy decisionmaking framework'. This framework represents a contribution to the ongoing efforts of FPA scholars to develop integrated frameworks for explaining foreign policy (Mintz and DeRouen 2010; Yetiv 2011b; V. M. Hudson 2014). While the framework was specifically designed to reconstruct aid policy decisions, it can be applied to decisionmaking episodes in other realms of foreign policy. The methodological technique of using the reconstruction of decisionmaking episodes leading to declaratory policy documents ('white paper' type outputs) as the entry point from where causal process tracing is employed to further examine why change occurs also has wider applicability

Finally, this thesis contributes new *theoretical* knowledge by postulating an actor-specific theory of aid policy change. In a demonstration of mechanisms-based theorising (Bennett 2013) the study advances the concepts of 'decider salience' and 'aid salience shocks' as devices to explore and explain how political attention drives aid policy change. The prospects for the application of these ideas to realms of foreign policy beyond aid are addressed in more detail in chapter 9.

1.8 Thesis Synopsis

This thesis unfolds in two parts, bookended by this introduction and a conclusion. The trio of chapters forming Part I engage sequentially with the three key bodies of literature the thesis interacts with to generate an answer to the thesis question. Chapter 2 situates my study within the determinants of aid literature, the 'home' literature this study engages with and seeks to extend and speak to. By employing Kenneth Waltz's (1959) levels of analysis framework to

organise my survey of this subliterate, I show how the major existing frameworks for understanding why states give aid are distinguished by the credence they give to explanatory factors arising from a particular level of analysis. The literature review demonstrates that to generate more complete explanations of aid policy change requires examining such instances through a less-exclusionary lens than currently available.

In response, chapter 3 explains how I imported key ideas from the Foreign Policy Analysis subliterate to construct a multilevel recapturing scheme to reconstruct aid policy decisionmaking episodes. By depicting how political actors mediate between constraints operating simultaneously at different levels of analysis, my 'aid policy decisionmaking framework' serves as a visual depiction of how I conceptualise aid policy decisionmaking to operate. The framework also functions as a methodological device by ensuring variables of 'theoretical interest' are accounted for when reconstructing decisionmaking episodes (George and Bennett 2005, 69). The concluding section of chapter 3 explains how I operationalised the framework, discussing how I used the reconstructed decisionmaking episodes the framework generated as the basis for developing analytical explanations of aid policy change in each case study country by using causal process tracing.

Chapter 4 describes how I appropriate key insights from the agenda-setting literature to develop an actor-specific theory of aid policy change. Here I explicate the explanatory mechanisms of decider salience and aid salience shocks that allow me to explain how and why states change the trajectory of their aid policy. Underpinning the operation of these explanatory mechanisms is an assessment of the characteristics of the aid policy issue area (Lundsgaarde 2013, chapter 2)—characteristics which hinge on aid's low issue salience.

Part II of the thesis demonstrates the plausibility of the theory of aid policy change. It does so by telling the stories of aid policy change in Australia (chapter 5), the UK (chapter 6) and the Netherlands (chapter 7) using decider salience and aid salience shocks as the basis for each narrative. These chapters adhere to the same basic structure, with the explanations of aid policy change since the early 2000s unfolding across four 'acts' in each case. At the same time, these chapters differ in their tone and focus, reflecting the subject matter. For example, the chapter on Australia focuses quite heavily on budgetary concerns, while the chapter on the Netherlands looks closely at recent changes in Dutch identity.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 are very heavily footnoted, a product of my causal process tracing methodology. Rather than aggregating of this material in a methodological annex, I decided that

footnoting it not only allows the reader to rapidly access additional supporting information for the claims I make, but is also the best way to convey how these accounts were developed. Part II concludes with chapter 8, which compares aid salience shocks in comparative perspective and highlights specific factors that decisively shaped aid policy change *across* the case studies.

Following Part II, a Conclusion recalls the steps the thesis undertook to generate a response to the research question, before reflecting on some of the limitations of the study. I then consider the contributions the study makes to the literature. Based on this discussion, I make a series of recommendations for future research, especially regarding further testing, verification, and application of the explanatory mechanisms this thesis introduces.

§§§

PART I

2 Assessing the ‘Determinants of Aid’ Literature

“Foreign Aid is something new under the sun.”

—Kenneth Waltz, 1967

“[T]he ongoing debate over the foreign aid regime remains trapped in something of an intellectual vacuum”.

—Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor, 1998

“[R]ather than one level containing the variables that are most significant for all problems, the importance of each level may vary from one issue area to another”

—Robert Jervis, 1976

Why do states give aid? This seemingly straightforward question has puzzled international relations scholars since the emergence of the modern aid regime. In 1962, Hans Morgenthau (1962, 301) observed that “of the seeming and real innovations which the modern age has introduced into the practice of foreign policy, none has proved more baffling to both understanding and action than foreign aid”. Despite substantial scholarly attention over the course of more than half a century, this sense of bafflement remains (van der Veen 2011, 2; Lancaster 2007a, 3; Ramalingam 2013, 10; Hoeffler and Outram 2011, 237). “[T]he factors shaping foreign aid,” conceded van der Veen (2011, 2) in a definitive recent assessment, “remain ill-understood”. This thesis set out to improve this understanding.

More troubling than the continuing lack of understanding of the factors shaping foreign aid is the growing sense that scholarship in this area has reached an intellectual cul-de-sac. In 1998, Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor (1998, 295) remarked that, “the ongoing debate over the foreign

aid regime remains trapped in something of an intellectual vacuum". It is telling that the authors of some of the most important aid scholarship in the past twenty years have made a point of acknowledging the ongoing relevance of this assessment²². In some ways, however, a sense of confoundment has always hovered over the scholarship of aid. As the Waltz (1967, 185) epigraph that introduces this chapter suggests, it has long been the case that the empirical realities of aid policy defy existing categories of thought and analysis. A pertinent question for anybody engaging with the determinants of aid literature to ask, therefore, is to ask why this is the case.

In response to this question, this chapter surveys the historical trajectory of the determinants of aid scholarship—a subliterate concerned with “which donor gives to which recipient and why” (Alesina and Dollar 2000, 34)—within the broader International Relations literature. Reviews of this literature most commonly proceed by explaining how each the dominant International Relations paradigms account for donor behaviour²³. I chart a different course here, arguing that owing to a combination of disciplinary, historical and scholarly reasons, two predominant approaches have dominated how scholars approach explaining the aid-giving behaviour of states.

Most aid scholarship operates within the ‘selfish-selfless framework’ or the ‘domestic determinants framework’ (see Table 2.A below). The ‘selfish-selfless framework’ describes an approach that, at root, seeks to determine whether selfish or selfless motives predominate in the observable aid-giving behaviour of states. This approach crystallised in the late 1970s and has stressed third image factors. Scholars working from within this approach typically deploy quantitative models to determine why states give aid. The ‘domestic determinants framework’ emerged in response to the ‘selfish-selfless’ framework, as part of the domestic politics turn in IR. Scholars working within this alternate framework typically deploy qualitative methodologies to ascertain why and how certain domestic factors influence aid giving behaviour of states.

In the two sections that comprise this chapter, I review these frameworks in turn, charting the emergence, findings, and explanatory deficiencies for each. My purpose in doing so is to reveal what the existing literature neglects, thereby building the case for what needs to change if the

²² van der Veen (2011, 9), for example, quoted this statement, while Piciotto (2007, 477) makes a similar argument when contending that “the need for competent analyses of foreign aid – the complex, innovative, and by now indispensable instrument of international relations – is urgent.”

²³ Good examples of this approach to surveying the determinants of aid literature include Van Belle, Rioux and Potter (2004, 8–23), Hook (1995, 34–40) and van der Veen (2011, 24–28).

determinants of aid literature is to progress. By presenting such a diagnosis, this chapter prepares the way for the prescription I develop in chapter 3.

Table 2.A: Approaches for Explaining Why States Give Aid

	Selfish-Selfless Framework	Domestic Determinants Framework
Level-of-analysis	Third Image (International)	Second Image (Domestic)
Status	Historically dominant	Alternative
Key question	Do selfish or selfless motives predominate the aid-giving behaviour of states?	What domestic level factors influence the aid-giving behaviour of states?
Empirical Focus	<i>What</i> factors influence aid giving behaviour of states	<i>Why and how</i> certain domestic factors influence aid giving behaviour of states
Period of Emergence	Late 1970s, with McKinlay and Little's development of the recipient-need—donor-interest model	Late 1980s, with the 'first wave' of domestic determinants scholars
Reason for emergence	To test the increasingly dominant 'foreign policy view of aid' (i.e. realist view)	The simplistic and unsatisfying explanations offered by the selfish-selfless framework

Over the course of this chapter, I highlight three major deficiencies in the determinants of aid literature. First, it relies heavily on generalisations about state motivations. Scholars have prioritised discovering patterns in aid allocative behaviour, rather than illuminating exactly how and why the process of aid policy change occurs. Second, the two frameworks are alike in that they both virtually ignore the role of first image factors—factors which, as Waltz (1959:16) described, “are found in the nature and behaviour of man”. Over the course of the chapter, I demonstrate how—to paraphrase from the Jervis (1976, 16) epigraph above—the two frameworks give explanatory precedence to factors explaining aid policy choices that originate from *one* level of analysis (international or domestic). And third, by discounting the role of factors stemming from the unique perspectives and preferences of individual human decisionmakers in determining why states give aid, the explanations the popular frameworks generate provide about aid policy change are narrow and incomplete. In sum, the literature review connects to the core question of this thesis—why do states change the trajectory of their aid policy?—by revealing the limitations of the default approaches which are typically employed to respond to this question.

Before commencing the review, however, it is important to address two potential concerns the reader may have. The first relates to what some may consider to be the reductionist way I have framed the determinants of aid literature. My characterisation of this literature as featuring two broad frameworks is not meant to deny that some aid scholarship has deliberately sought to move beyond the strictures these frameworks impose. (Indeed, throughout this chapter, and

especially in the opening section of chapter 3, I highlight examples of such innovative scholarship). Rather, my decision to use this chapter to document the disciplinary, historical and scholarly reasons behind the emergence and direction of these two main frameworks stems from my desire to chart the big-picture trajectory of the determinants of aid subliterature. I do this in order to demonstrate why aid scholarship has neglected first-image explanations for why states give aid. Only when these reasons are understood is it possible to begin to think about how to overcome them.

The second potential concern I wish to allay is this; by demonstrating the extent to which *aid scholarship* in International Relations neglects first-image explanations, I do not mean to imply that the discipline (and closely related ones such as policy studies) has not developed relevant conceptual tools and approaches for examining how first image factors contribute to foreign policy change. Scholars have shown how individuals can drive foreign policy change using concepts including foreign policy entrepreneurship (Carter and Scott 2009; Mintrom and Norman 2009; Mintrom and Luetjens 2017; Davies and True 2017), policy gatekeepers (Busby 2007; 2010) and veto players (Tsebelis 1995; 2002), to highlight some prominent examples. While I will return to these concepts later in the thesis, especially to highlight their relation to the new concepts I propose, my immediate objective here is to explain why, as Fuchs and Dreher (2017:3) recognise, the determinants of aid literature “barely touches on the role of the decision-makers responsible for the provision of development assistance.”

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2.1 The Third Image Approach: The Selfish-selfless Dichotomy

At the heart of the determinants of aid literature lies an enduring and unresolved debate concerning whether states give aid for selfish or selfless reasons (Alesina and Dollar 2000, 35; Heinrich 2013; Palmer, Wohlander, and Morgan 2002, 8; van der Veen 2011, 2; Berthélemy 2006, 179). In this section of the chapter, I argue that the Manichean quality that pervades this literature flows from the selfish-selfless framework upon which much aid scholarship is built (van der Veen 2011, 9). Tracing the emergence of this framework in the late 1970s shows that it was developed as a direct response to a contemporary debate concerning whether realist or idealist theories of state behavior best explained aid allocation. Reflecting the prevailing trends in International Relations, the selfish-selfish framework rapidly became the dominant approach

employed by scholars of aid. As a result, it followed much aid scholarship has inadvertently focused on resolving the incompatibility between the traditional International Relations paradigms.

2.1.1 *The Foundations of the Selfish-Selfless Framework*

To understand the determinants of aid literature, and especially the Manichean quality of the dominant third-image based selfish-selfless framework, it is critical to understand its genesis. The established post-World War II wisdom held that the provision of aid was a moral imperative (Riddell 1987, 74). President Harry S. Truman's 1949 inaugural speech (the 'Four Points' speech), which according to Hattori (2003, 229) "launched the worldwide phenomenon known as foreign aid", was decisive in establishing this view. "Only by helping the least fortunate of its members to help themselves", Truman (1949) declared, "can the human family achieve the decent, satisfying life that is the right of all people." Truman committed the United States to sharing the benefits of "scientific advances and industrial progress" in order to assist the "growth of underdeveloped areas" of the world.

From the 1950s to the mid-1970s, an 'unquestioned consensus' held that states provided development assistance for altruistic reasons. The moral case for aid was "stated boldly, repeatedly and usually without any explanation" (Riddell 1987, 6), especially by political leaders, who—taking their cue from Truman—cast the provision of foreign aid provision as an imperative for rich nations²⁴. This rationale for aid provision was linked closely with the idealist (or liberal) paradigm for understanding international relations. For idealists (then and now), aid represented a shared, collaborative enterprise that delivered mutual benefits (Van Belle, Rioux, and Potter 2004, 18). The rapid emergence of the international aid regime only reinforced this notion. In 1961 alone, for example, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act passed into law, the UN General Assembly declared the 1960s to be a 'Decade of Development' and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was established (Arase 2017). For idealists, the rapid growth and influence of aid-related initiatives during the post-World War II period demonstrated the potential for institutions and norms to override power politics (Walt 1998, 38; J. Snyder 2004, 56).

²⁴ A good example is from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address from 1960, delivered a decade after Truman's 'four points' speech. "To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery," Kennedy pledged "our best efforts to help them to help themselves, for whatever period is required – not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right" (Kennedy, quoted in Riddell 1987, 6).

Realists disputed this reading of events. Although their views were marginal in the public discourse on aid at this point, realists had long been sceptical that states provided aid for altruistic reasons, assuming instead that self-interested motives were the most important determinant in how states allocated development assistance. This 'foreign policy view' of aid was most clearly advocated by Morgenthau (1962, 301), who rejected the notion that the provision of foreign aid carried "its own justification" that transcended foreign policy. "A policy of foreign aid is [and should be] no different from diplomatic or military policy or propaganda," argued Morgenthau (1962, 309), "[t]hey are all weapons in the armoury of the nation." Morgenthau's fellow realist Samuel Huntington reinforced these views in a pair of articles in *Foreign Policy* in late 1970 and early 1971. Huntington (1970, 167) rejected what he termed the 'purist rationale', which considered foreign aid an 'end in itself'. In other words, both Morgenthau and Huntington, along with other realists, viewed foreign aid in the same way as other tools of statecraft. "[F]rom the realist perspective," explains Hook (1995, 34), "foreign assistance should primarily, if not exclusively, be designed to facilitate donor interests."

The 'moral case' for aid held sway so long as the West enjoyed the increasing prosperity of the long post-World War II economic boom. It also helped that during this time the field of development economics reinforced the belief that economic progress was possible in the developing world. It was only in the wake of the economic uncertainty created by the early-1970s oil crisis that the message of political realists began to resonate more widely. Alongside the 'foreign policy view' of aid advanced by political realists and led by Morgenthau and Huntington, two additional critiques of the 'unquestioned consensus' emerged from related disciplines (Riddell 1987). Peter Bauer, an influential development economist, was the intellectual leader of a viewpoint that objected to the provision of aid because it failed to achieve its policy objective. According to Bauer (1969, 1972, 1981, 1984), aid was not effective in alleviating poverty. A further critique, emerging from moral philosophy, held that states have no moral obligations to provide aid (Hayek 1973; Nozick 1974). As these complementary aid-sceptic views gained traction, the realist view of aid became more acceptable. However, just as conditions were conducive for the message of political realists to be heard, it was recognised that strong empirical evidence to support this theoretically-based view was lacking.

The determinants of aid literature emerged in direct response to this shortcoming. McKinlay and Little (1978a, 460), the founders of the determinants of aid literature, expressly acknowledged that "while there is strong corroboration of the foreign policy view of aid, this view has not been systematically developed". Building upon the insights of Packenham (1966) and Dudley and Montmarquette (1976), McKinlay and Little set out to 'systematically develop' a theoretical

model to test whether the predominant ‘foreign policy view’ of aid was in fact supported by data (McKinlay and Little 1978a, 460). Since donor motives cannot be directly observed, this entailed developing “empirically testable hypotheses relating observed aid flows to observable developing country characteristics” (McGillivray and White 1993, 2–3). McKinlay and Little developed two alternate models – ‘recipient need’ and ‘donor interest’ – and tested their relative fit against the historical disbursements of the four major donors of the time (Berthélemy and Tichit 2004, 254): the United States (McKinlay and Little 1977, 1979); Britain (McKinlay and Little 1978b); France (McKinlay and Little 1978a) and Germany (McKinlay 1978).

The work of McKinlay and Little launched a substantial line of scholarly enquiry. However, as we will see, this literature has never entirely broken free from its original dualistic foundation. McKinlay and Little designed their studies with a very clear rationale: to determine which of the two dominant paradigms in international relations, idealism (the ‘moral view’ of aid) or realism (the ‘foreign policy view’ of aid), best explained the aid allocations of traditional donors. The either-or nature of this motivating question continues to dominate the international relations scholarship examining why states give aid.

2.1.2 The Findings of Selfish-Selfless Framework

McKinlay and Little’s influential series of studies spawned a large family of publications which continues to grow (Hoeffler and Outram 2011, 237; Neumayer 2003, 18)²⁵. Since the 1970s, scholars building on McKinlay and Little’s work have made increasingly sophisticated attempts to disentangle the relative importance of selfish and selfless motives in aid policy by employing quantitative methods (Berthélemy 2006, 179). Studies that are direct descendants have two distinguishing features: they employ variations of the donor interest (DI) versus recipient need (RN) model first introduced by McKinlay and Little; and they utilise DAC datasets²⁶. Scholars have worked to advance this literature by refining the standard DI-RN model (for example by populating it using different variables)²⁷, interrogating newly available data, or doing both (see, for example, Tierney et al. 2011). The models utilised by most studies control for the “political, economic, military-strategic and cultural interests of donors”, while per capita income is the

²⁵ The almost exclusive use of DAC datasets in the determinants of aid literature has meant that the determinant of aid literature is overwhelmingly focused on traditional donors, especially the largest of these (i.e. the United States, Japan, Germany, France and the UK).

²⁶ Key studies in the determinants of aid literature that examine bilateral aid allocation include (Maizels and Nissanke 1984; Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998; Alesina and Dollar 2000; Gates and Hoeffler 2004; Berthélemy and Tichit 2004; Berthélemy 2006; Hoeffler and Outram 2011; Heinrich 2013). McGillivray and White (1993) survey the earlier literature, while Neumayer (2003) provides a more recent overview.

²⁷ Neumayer (2003, 21–29), provides an excellent summary of existing studies in this family in an exceedingly detailed table in which he specifies the variables each study uses to model donor interest and recipient need.

most regularly employed proxy for recipient need (Neumayer 2003, 19). Models which include variables which account for the social needs of recipient states, such as levels of health and education, or the broader economic needs of the recipient, such as the state of government finances, are also common (Neumayer 2003, 19).

The aggregate conclusion of the determinants of aid literature is that donor behaviour is better explained by self-interested motives than selfless ones (Gates and Hoeffler 2004; Hoeffler and Outram 2011, 237; Alesina and Dollar 2000, 35; Lightfoot, Davis, and Johns 2015, 12). In their seminal study, Alesina and Dollar (2000, 35) point out that the “idealistic view [of aid motivations] sharply contrasts with a voluminous literature that has argued that strategic foreign policy concerns explain the pattern of foreign aid”. These results imply that the selfless rhetoric political leaders use to explain (or justify) aid policy decisions does not match their ultimately selfish motivations (Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998, 319; Thiele, Nunnenkamp, and Dreher 2007, 596). As Schraeder, Hook and Taylor (1998, 319) conclude: “the results clearly reject the rhetorical statements of policymakers within the industrialized North who public assert that foreign aid is an altruistic tool of foreign policy.”

There is one striking departure from the general finding of the determinants of aid literature that states provide aid for self-interested reasons: “the aid allocation patterns of the Nordic countries are not the same as those of other bilateral aid agencies” (Gates and Hoeffler 2004, 2). The behaviour of these Nordic states—Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, with the Netherlands and sometimes Canada included—has consistently been found to be driven at least in part by selfless motives²⁸. Alesina and Dollar (2000, 33) and Berthelemy (2006) have emphasised that these donors respond more readily to the ‘correct’ incentives. This finding aligns with the general reputation the Nordic donors enjoy as superior performers when it comes to good development practice. All have a long history of providing aid for development, have usually been ranked amongst the most generous donors (measured as proportion of GNP), and are perceived to be at the vanguard of development practice and innovation.

Qualitative studies designed to probe the insights of the determinants of aid literature are not as beholden to the selfish-selfless dichotomy as their quantitative counterparts. Instead, these studies invariably find that donor behaviour is more complicated than the quantitatively-driven selfish-selfless model implied. Nonetheless, this family of studies reinforces the notion that donor states provide aid primarily for self-interest reasons. Scholars tracing the foreign aid

²⁸ See, for example, Alesina and Dollar (2000, 33), Berthélemy (2006), Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen (2003); Gates and Hoeffler (2004), Ingebritsen (2002), Stokke (1989c) and Neumayer (2003, 5).

policies of individual countries over time, including the US (Atwood, McPherson, and Natsios 2008; Lancaster 2007a), the UK (Williams 2005), Japan (Rix 1993) and Australia (Davis 2006; Firth 2005, 270–294; Rosser 2008; Davis 2011), for example, have shown them to be substantially driven by self-interest.

One key way that scholars working in the qualitative tradition have sought to escape the strictures of the prevailing selfish-selfless dichotomy is by suggesting typologies which allow for a more nuanced appreciation of donor motivations. For example, Carol Lancaster (2007a, 13), in her seminal comparative study investigating why countries give foreign aid, found that governments give aid for four main purposes: diplomatic (“goals involving a government’s international security and political interest abroad”); developmental; humanitarian relief (“the least controversial of aid’s purposes”); and commercial²⁹. While such typologies point to the underlying complexity of state behaviour, and are certainly useful heuristics for understanding state motivations, they ultimately remain wedded to the Manichean categories they are trying to escape, as each of the typologies is readily reducible to a self-interested or selfless motivation. For example, aid provided for ‘commercial’ purposes can be interpreted as a subcategory of ‘selfishness’. These taxonomies therefore represent augmentations to the dominant conceptual apparatus for understanding why states give aid, and do not provide a fundamentally different lens through which to generate new insight.

The same can be said for another approach which is regularly used to try and escape the analytical strictures of the selfish-selfless dichotomy. Essentially, this approach conceives of a state’s foreign aid policy as comprising a *mixture* of motivations (Lancaster 2007a, 6) which, when aggregated together, reveals a ‘summary motivation’ that can be located along a spectrum ranging from entirely selfish to entirely selfless³⁰. This result is that a proliferation of studies that could be termed ‘donor profiles’ have emerged, outlining whether selfish or selfless motives predominate in state’s bilateral aid policy³¹. This approach can be helpful in providing a more detailed snapshot of donor behaviour at a point in time and for revealing how motivations shift

²⁹ In contrast, van der Veen (2011, 10), identifies seven broad frames relevant to aid policy; security, power/influence, wealth/economic self-interest, enlightened self-interest, reputation/self-affirmation, obligation/duty and humanitarianism. Riddell (Riddell 2007, 91), meanwhile, talks of “six main clusters of motives” which have, “historically influenced donor decisions to allocate aid”.

³⁰ As Maizels and Nissanke (1984, 880) argue, “[b]oth of [the] broad motivations for giving aid - to assist development and to promote the interests of the donor - are no doubt present in most aid allocation decisions, and it is to be expected that the balance between the two will vary among the different donor countries as well as over time” (Maizels and Nissanke 1984, 880).

³¹ For the USA, national security and commercial interests predominate. For France, veneration of former colonies is important (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen 2003, 9; Lancaster 2007b, 29). Commercial and diplomatic imperatives drive Japan’s aid policy (Rix 1993). On the other hand, moral and humanitarian obligations concern the Nordic countries (Degnbol-Martinussen and Engberg-Pedersen 2003, 9; Gates and Hoeffler 2004; Ingebritsen 2002; Berthélemy 2006).

over time. Yet we are still left with little insight as to precisely what triggers these changes. Once again, the 'donor profiles' approach augments the dominant conceptual apparatus for understanding why states give aid, rather providing a new lens through which to view the question at hand.

2.1.3 Evaluating the Selfish-Selfless Framework

The still-dominant framework pioneered by McKinlay and Little answers the question 'why do states give aid' by seeking to understand whether selfish or selfless motives dominate the foreign aid allocations of a given state (Palmer, Wohlander, and Morgan 2002, 8). Once this distinct approach to responding to this question gained supremacy in the determinants of aid literature, a Manichean approach to analysing aid-giving behaviour infused the study of aid in International Relations. The development of fresh analytical perspectives has been hindered because of the inadvertent focus on resolving the incompatibility between the visions of the traditional international relations paradigms (Feeny and McGillivray 2008, 516; Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998, 320). The determinants of aid literature, via its foundations in the donor-interest versus recipient-need model, has reified a pair of incompatible metatheoretical understandings of how the world works as our principle conceptual categories for understanding why states give aid. As Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor (1998, 297) have explained, "scholars hold a priori assumptions that lead them to create and adhere to competing paradigms about which interests motivated donor involvement in the foreign aid regime of the cold war era."

The selfish-selfless formulation may be a parsimonious analytical framework for understanding aid policy that continues to dominate the public (and even some professional) discourse. But for the advancement of scholarly understanding of how aid policy is formulated, it has an obvious shortcoming: it is overly simplistic³² (Breuning 1995, 236; Heinrich 2013, 433; Riddell 1987, Chapter 4). The persistence of the artificial selfish-selfless dichotomy as the key framework for explaining aid allocation has meant that the literature prioritises categorisation at the expense of understanding and examines outcomes at the expense of process. Riddell (2007, 92) cuts to the heart of what this means in practice when he observes that "while no one seriously doubts

³² Of course, part of the reason the dualistic selfish-selfish framework remains so dominant, especially in the realm of public discourse, is precisely because it is so simple. It conveys a substantial degree of information that allows for a rapid assessment or predication of state behaviour. And as explained earlier, the categories on offer readily align with most people's philosophical predilections. In short, the selfish-selfish framework is a powerful heuristic for understanding why states give aid—one that even the most sophisticated analysts of aid policy commonly resort to. Finally, given the limited public and political understanding of aid policy, coupled with the inherent complexity of this aspect of foreign policy, it is unlikely to expect this heuristic, which already dominates the way debates on aid policy are conducted, will be discarded any time soon. This is especially the case in a sound-bite driven media culture in the West that increasingly rewards politicians who engage with the type of either-or lens offered up by the determinants of aid literature.

that donor commercial pressures and national self-interest have been and continue to be important to the allocation of aid, the precise way in which this influence is manifested remains contested.” What Riddell is expressing is that the literature remains overly wedded to a framework that explains *what* factors influence aid allocation. This comes at the expense of adequately explain why, how, or when these factors impact aid allocation³³. We are left unsure of exactly how or why changes in aid policy occur. Tobias Heinrich (2013) drew attention to this fundamental oversight in the literature by titling his recent article ‘When is Foreign Aid Selfish, When is it Selfless?’

To be clear, the claim I am forwarding here goes beyond simply highlighting the need for more work to be done in fleshing out the existing framework. My charge is that—whatever other limitations it has—the selfish-selfless framework can only ever provide a partial explanation of state behaviour. This is because the determinants of aid literature assumes that the “locus of cause” (Waltz 1959, 13) of a state’s aid allocation decisions relates to the international system. To state this another way, while the realist and liberal/idealist paradigms disagree about the potential and scope for cooperation in the international realm, they share fundamental assumptions about the nature of the context states operate within. A shared commitment to rationalism means both paradigms treat “the identities and interests of agents as exogenously given” (Wendt 1992, 391). In an anarchical world where states are the highest authority, international society represents a strategic realm “in which individuals or states come together to pursue their pre-defined interests” (Reus-Smit 2005, 192). These interests, in line with orthodox approaches to International Relations that have been ‘baked in’ to the determinants of aid literature, are exogenously determined, largely by material structures (Mielniczuk 2013, 1076).

The way the donor-interest—recipient-need model is formulated means quantitative studies in the determinants of aid family inherently “treat the state as a unitary, utility maximizing agent” (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 13). The various indicators of state behaviour incorporated into the model are aggregated at the level of the state. The state is the actor whose behaviour is examined. And the behaviour of a donor state, whether ultimately found to be selfish or selfless, is assessed based on their interactions with other states. All of this means that second image factors are ‘black-boxed’ by the model (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 13). The donor-

³³ For example, Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 13) record how it is common for quantitative researchers in this tradition to “find that a certain donor gives more aid to its trading partners, but they will usually not go into details explaining which domestic constituency this benefits, how they lobbied for this, or why the government decided to support these particular interests as opposed to others, which may, for example, favor allocating aid along poverty reduction criteria.”

interest—recipient-need model’s ability to explain nuanced state behaviour is further cast into doubt given aid allocation motives are inferred from proxy variables (Breuning 1995, 236). Most notably, per capita income is the most regularly employed proxy for recipient need (Neumayer 2003, 19)—a problematic assumption given that recent research is showing that the majority of the world’s poor people are now found within middle-income countries (Kanbur and Sumner 2012; Sumner 2012)³⁴.

The selfish-selfless framework has a limited ability to explain policy change. Like other traditional utility-maximising models in international relations, the selfish-selfless framework explains outcomes by looking at variations in capabilities and constraints (van der Veen 2011). Van Belle is among those who have acknowledged that third image explanations, while inherently important, provide inescapably *incomplete* accounts of foreign policy decisions. Such accounts “can establish the limits that the international area and the attributes of the state impose upon the leader’s menu of available choices” but are incapable of uncovering the domestic forces motivating the decisionmaker (Van Belle 1993, 151). Increasingly aware of this reality, aid scholars from the late 1980s onwards began to pay much more attention to how within-state factors influenced aid policy choices, much like their colleagues in the broader discipline.

§§§

2.2 The Second Image Approach: Domestic Determinants of Aid

International Relations scholarship increasingly focused on systemic factors as the Cold War progressed, in large part in response to Waltz’s discipline-shaping structural realism (Waltz 1979). “[B]y the end of the 1980’s,” recalls Kaarbo (2015, 193) the dominant theoretical paradigms of “constructivism, liberalism, and realism largely divorced international politics from domestic politics and decision making.” Likewise, Milner (1997, 3) had earlier observed how “[d]omestic variables were largely driven out of international relations theory in the 1980s...”³⁵ The implications for the determinants of aid literature was that the selfish-selfless framework for understanding why states give aid acquired dominance in large part because its focus on third image factors hewed closely to the theoretical priorities of the broader discipline.

³⁴ Sumner (2012, 15) relates how, “[i]n 1990, approximately 90 percent of the world’s poor people... lived in low income countries....[while in] 2008, 70-80 percent of the world’s poor people.... lived in middle-income countries.”

³⁵ Smith (1986, 14) agrees, acknowledging that “[i]n all three general perspectives [dominant at the time of writing in the 1980s] the critical determinants of foreign policy are to be found in the nature of the international system.”

Yet since the late 1980s, a ‘domestic politics turn’ has been evident in International Relations (Kaarbo 2015), driven by a series of important articles and books emphasising the importance of incorporating domestic politics into International Relations theory in order to explain foreign policy choices (Putnam 1988; Zakaria 1992; Milner 1997; Fearon 1998; De Mesquita 2002). This section of the chapter documents how the domestic politics turn in International Relations was reflected in determinants of aid literature. Specifically, I show how the ‘domestic determinants’ framework for understanding why states give aid emerged in response to the ‘selfish-selfless’ framework, as aid scholars increasingly focused on opening up the black box of the state to examine how domestic-level factors influenced aid policy.

In the first two parts of this section of the literature review I describe the two ‘waves’ of aid scholarship driven by the ‘domestic determinants’ framework (refer Table 2.B below). Then, in the concluding part, I argue that the second image-rooted ‘domestic determinants’ framework, while greatly advancing our knowledge of why states give aid, ultimately exhibits similar deficiencies as the ‘selfish-selfless’ framework it responded to. Despite being much more capable of making sense of the complexity of aid policy, the explanations offered by the ‘domestic determinants’ framework are likewise partial.

In making this argument, I focus predominantly on a subset of the determinants of aid literature that I refer to as ‘qualitative studies in comparative aid policy’ (see Table 2.B below). While these studies exhibit significant differences, they are alike in four important ways. Most obviously, each of these book length studies employs the comparative case study methodology, which reflects a desire to provide a more detailed and nuanced explanation of why states give aid. Second, these studies all conceive of aid policy as its own issue area—a considerable departure from previous studies. Third, each of these studies explicitly rejects the selfish-selfless framework as being inadequate for the task of explaining aid policy³⁶. Finally, to generate more detailed explanations of aid policy, these scholars actively incorporate and integrate domestic factors into their analysis.

³⁶ For example, Breuning (1992, 17) made it clear that her doctoral research responded to “the dichotomy that presents foreign assistances as either stemming from selfish political motives or an altruistic development orientation”, a perspective that was (and remains) “in need of reevaluation”.

Table 2.B: Two Waves of Qualitative Comparative Aid Policy: Selected Studies

	Title	Author/s, Date	Cases	Timeframe
First Wave	<i>Western middle powers and global poverty</i>	Olav Stokke (editor), 1989	Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden (5)	Focus on 1975 to late 1980s.
	<i>National role conceptions and foreign assistance policy behavior: toward a cognitive model (doctoral thesis)</i>	Marijke Breuning, 1992 ³⁷	Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom (3)	1975-1990
	<i>National interest and foreign aid</i>	Steven W. Hook, 1995	Denmark, Switzerland, France, US (4)	Focus on the 1980s.
Second Wave	<i>Media, Bureaucracies and Foreign Aid</i>	Van Belle, Rioux and Potter, 2004	United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Japan (5)	1985-1998
	<i>Foreign aid: diplomacy, development, domestic politics</i>	Carol Lancaster, 2007	US, Japan, France, Germany, Denmark (5)	Post WWII to early 2000s
	<i>Ideas, interests and foreign aid</i>	A Maurits van der Veen, 2011	Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Norway (4)	1950 to 2000
	<i>The domestic politics of foreign aid</i>	Erik Lundsgaarde, 2013	Denmark, France, Switzerland, US (4)	1980-2005
	<i>New Europe's new development aid</i>	Simon Lightfoot and Balázs Szent-Iványi, 2015	Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia (5)	The decade following 2004 EU accession

I have four reasons for focusing on this subset of the determinants of aid literature here. First, the studies highlighted in Table 2.B have had a disproportionate impact on the study of aid policy in international relations, setting the agenda in the field. Second, they each respond to the same types of questions that my research does, interrogating the reasons why different states adopt different aid policies at an elevated level of detail. Third, I approach the study of aid policy with a similar sensibility as these authors. Perhaps it is primarily for this reason that I have found these studies to be both the most illuminating and most influential for my research. Fourth, I view my thesis as fitting into the tradition established by these authors. This thesis' contribution to new knowledge is tied to continuing and extending the line of enquiry pioneered by the scholars feature in Table 2.B above. Where I diverge from these scholars is to examine how individual actors engage in specific aid policy decisionmaking episodes, using this as a basis for understanding which factors impact a state's aid-giving behaviour.

³⁷ Later published as an article in *International Studies Quarterly* (Breuning 1995).

2.2.1 The 'First Wave' of Comparative Aid Policy Scholarship

The chief harbinger of the domestic politics turn in the determinants of aid literature was the emergence of convincing critiques of the prevailing Manichean selfish-selfless framework. The development specialist³⁸ Roger Riddell (1987, 65–73), in his book *Foreign Aid Reconsidered*, was the first author to make a sustained argument that the dichotomy at the heart the determinants of aid literature was both false and misleading, and did not take account the complexities of the real world. David Lumsdaine extended Riddell's critique in his 1993 book *Moral Vision in International Politics: The Foreign Aid Regime 1949-1989*. Lumsdaine embedded Riddell's critique explicitly in the International Relations literature by examining and challenging the underlying theoretical assumptions that the selfish-selfless framework was based on. Lumsdaine (1993, 13) rejects the notion that "international politics is a realm apart, utterly distinct from human character and domestic society" and offers a five-point critique for why the "system-level determination of self-interest" does not always hold. (While important precursors to the comparative aid policy scholarship, I have not recorded Riddell and Lumsdaine's contributions in Table 2.B as they do not use the same cross-country case study methodology as the scholars that are included).

For Lumsdaine (1993, 62), "the character of international politics is not wholly determined in advance by an unvarying human nature or international system but reflects moral choices which become embodied in the regular patterns of international affairs." To support this argument, Lumsdaine examines the aid giving practices of states over a fifty-year period. His investigation reveals that "foreign aid cannot be explained on the basis of economic and politics interests of the donor countries alone, and any satisfactory explanation must give a central place to the influence of humanitarian and egalitarian convictions upon aid donors" (Lumsdaine 1993, 29). Lumsdaine's account of change in the foreign aid regime gave further credence to the idea that accounting for second image factors is an indispensable component for understanding aid policy change.

The progress achieved by Riddell and Lumsdaine was complemented by the work of a group of scholars who challenged the veracity of the dominant third image selfish-selfless framework using middle power theory. A volume edited by Olav Stokke (1989c)—*Western middle powers and global poverty: the determinants of the aid policies of Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden*—sought to discover why the aid policies of these similar states were

³⁸ *Foreign Aid reconsidered* was written while Riddell was a research fellow at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

typically distinct from other donors. The study concluded that the major determinants of “[t]he aid policies of the five countries reflect, for most dimensions, the dominant socio-political values of the domestic environments” (Stokke 1989b, 309). Yet, in a reflection of how scholars studying aid were increasingly comfortable integrating third and second image perspectives to explain aid’s complexities, Stokke explained how aid policy is “moulded in a setting in which traditions, norms and interests of both the domestic and the external environment influence the outcome,” and that, “such determinants vary from one system to another” (Stokke 1989a, 9). A companion volume to Stokke’s study edited by Pratt (1990b) sought to examine why these five middle powers took a particular interest in development issues, found that these states prioritised development issues relative to other western donors because such issues were congruent with the prevailing political culture in these middle powers (Pratt 1990a, 15). These twin studies of Western middle powers typified the emerging comparative aid policy scholarship. Scholars active in this space were resolved to ‘look inside’ the black box of the state to discover why the aid policies of similar states differed.

Three especially important studies were published in 1995,^a making it a key year in the comparative aid policy literature. Steven Hook’s (1995) *National Interest and Foreign Aid*, Marijke Breuning’s (1995) *International Studies Quarterly* article (a condensed version of her doctoral dissertation (Breuning 1992)) and Alain Noël and Jean-Philippe Thérien’s (1995) contribution to *International Organization* together encapsulate the ‘first wave’ approach to aid scholarship. Most evident was the shared frustration with the constrictive and ineffective (for their purposes, at least) ‘selfish-selfless’ framework. Breuning (1995, 236), for example, finds that the “donor interest versus recipient need dichotomy is too simplistic”. Noël and Thérien, for their part, point out that “[i]nternational relations scholars obviously remain a long way from a consensus on the motivations underlying development assistance.” Even for Hook, whose study incorporates statistical analysis based directly on McKinley and Little’s model and, of the three studies, gives by far the most credence to third image factors, acknowledges that “a comprehensive understanding of state behavior requires an additional assessment of the role of unit-level characteristics [which Hook explicitly calls ‘domestic factors’] that bridge the gap between systemic context and observable behavior” (Hook 1995, 159).

Hook, Breuning, and Noël and Thérien each bring new theoretical concepts to bear on the study of aid. Steven Hook, beginning with his doctoral work (1993), through his first book (1995) and beyond (Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998; Hook 2008a; Hook and Rumsey 2016), has used regime theory (Krasner 1982) to examine how the foreign aid regime functions to both reflect and constrain donor state’s aid policy choices. (I discuss the literature on the international aid

regime in more detail in chapter three, subsection 3.3.3). Breuning's work also commenced with her doctoral studies (1992). She continues to deploy role theory to better understand aid policy choices (Breuning 2013), most notably by extending Holsti's (1970) notion of national role conceptions (Breuning 1995, 1998). (I also discuss the literature on national identity and aid in more detail in chapter 3, subsection 3.3.2). Noël and Thérien's 1995 article links the concepts introduced by Hook and Breuning to investigate how "welfare principles institutionalized at the domestic level shape the participation of developed countries in the international aid regime" (Noël and Thérien 1995, 523).

2.2.2 The 'Second Wave' of Comparative Aid Policy Scholarship

As indicated in Table 2.2, there was something of an interregnum in the production of important new qualitative studies in comparative aid policy between 1995, when Hook's monograph, *National Interest and Foreign Aid*, was published, and 2004, when Van Belle, Rioux and Potter's *Media, Bureaucracies and Foreign Aid* came out. While there was certainly ongoing interest in furthering understanding of 'Who Gives Foreign Aid to Whom and Why?' (the title of Alesina and Dollar's highly-cited 2000 study), much of the scholarly output during this interregnum period are comprises quantitative studies designed to elicit the type and relative influence of particular determinants of aid-giving behaviour)³⁹.

In most respects, the second wave of qualitative studies of comparative aid policy is simply an extension of the first wave. The five studies I deem as forming an identifiable 'second wave' of second-image orientated comparative research on aid policy (refer Table 2.A) built on the momentum created by the first wave, sharing the existing research orientation and objectives. Second wave scholars, however, experienced the added frustration that the study of aid seemed "trapped in... an intellectual vacuum" (Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998, 295)⁴⁰.

The most noticeable change between the first and second waves was in fact an external one. By the mid-2000s, the influence of agenda setting works such as Milner's *Interests, institutions, and information: domestic politics and international relations*—a book which explicitly sought to revive domestic explanations of foreign policy (Milner 1997, 3)—ensured that 'opening up the

³⁹ Key studies from this period include those by Schraeder, Hook and Taylor (1998), Alesina and Dollar (2000), Neumayer (2003) and Berthélemy and Tichit (2004). More recently, especially as new datasets have become available, aid scholars conducting quantitative research have become interested in a broader array of questions than those that motivated the earlier decedents of McKinlay and Little. These questions include whether aid allocations of traditional donors: align with the MDGs (Thiele, Nunnenkamp, and Dreher 2007), are impacted by terrorist incidents (Dreher and Fuchs 2011) or are significantly different from other groups of donors (Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele 2011; Szent-Iványi 2012).

⁴⁰ On such scholar is van der Veen (2011, 9), who quotes this line in his contribution to the literature.

black box of the state' was no longer a peripheral central concern of International Relations. More than their contemporary quantitative colleagues, who continued to focus on determining *what* factors mattered in aid allocation, second wave scholars were driven to understand *how* aid policy was determined. They sought more nuanced and comprehensive understandings of how various domestic-level processes influenced aid policy and explained cross-country differences and policy change⁴¹.

Lancaster's *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics* emphatically brought the domestic politics turn to the study of aid. Her pioneering study, as the title suggests, "emphasises the role of domestic political factors" (Lancaster 2007a, 5)⁴². Lancaster (2007a, 4) claims that "none of [the] theories of international politics explain adequately the complexities of aid's purposes". Yet rather than advancing a model of her own—"there are too many interacting variables to justify a model that would be both parsimonious and insightful", she argues (Lancaster 2007a, 9)—Lancaster deploys a four-component conceptual framework to analyse the aid giving practices of the United States, Japan, France, Germany and Denmark. Lancaster (2007a, 18–23) shows how four 'domestic political forces' are responsible for shaping foreign aid policy: ideas (or 'worldviews'); institutions (the rules of the political game); interests (the views of the public and how they are mobilised); and organization (the arrangements of the aid bureaucracy).

The contribution of van der Veen (2011), published four years after Lancaster's *Foreign Aid*, is considerably more methodologically and theoretically ambitious. His work is also the most avowedly constructivist of the second wave⁴³. Building upon the insights of Holsti (1970) and Breuning (1995) and Chong and Druckman (2007), van der Veen employs the concept of frames to examine how national identity impacts aid policy choices. To construct these frames, he analyses fifty years (1950–2000) of legislative debates in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway. In doing so, van der Veen (2011, 2) argues that "the central factor overlooked in the literature on aid is ideational: ideas about the goals and purposes of aid policy shape its formulation and implementation."

⁴¹ Lancaster (2007a, 9), for example, describes her use of the in-depth, case-study approach as "appropriate to the complexity of my topic and my intent to deepen our understanding of the politics of foreign aid."

⁴² For the remainder of this part of the chapter, I provide a capsule review of each of the 'second wave' comparative aid policy studies in chronological order. Readers will notice, however, that I begin with Lancaster and not Van Belle, Rioux and Potter's (2004) contribution, which was published prior to Lancaster's. This is because Lancaster provides a more natural starting point for the present discussion. I provide a capsule review of Van Belle, Rioux and Potter's later in the chapter, where I emphasise the integrative ambitions of this particular study.

⁴³ "In identifying frames as determinants of foreign policy outcomes," writes van der Veen (2011, 22) regarding the nature of his scholarly contribution "I add to the growing constructivist literature in international relations theory."

Lundsgaarde (2013) builds on Lancaster's approach by offering a more rigorous theoretical framework for "understanding foreign aid choices that places domestic politics and the development policymaking process at the centre of the analysis" (Lundsgaarde 2013, 1). His framework "views the supply of poverty-orientated foreign aid as a produce of domestic politics in donor countries" (Lundsgaarde 2013, 21). In examining Denmark, Switzerland, France and the United States, Lundsgaarde (2013, 7) focuses on how societal actors and government actors interact in the domestic sphere. By doing so, Lundsgaarde (2013, 4) addresses a critical gap in the determinants of aid scholarship, which "does not attempt to explain where donor motivations originate". Lundsgaarde (2013, 196) acknowledges that "[i]nstitutions do much of the heavy lifting" in his explanation for understanding aid policy choices.

Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi's study is particularly relevant to this project given its very similar research question: "[w]hat factors and dynamics account for the paths and trajectories taken in [the aid] policy area?" (2015, 32). Given that the main driver of the re-emergence of the development programs of all five of the East Central European (ECE) states these authors consider⁴⁴, they acknowledge the observed divergence their aid policy trajectories must necessarily be explained by domestic factors (2015, 32). However, while Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 13), acknowledge there have been "considerable advancements" in understanding the role of domestic politics of foreign aid decision-making since the turn of the millennium, they nonetheless concede they remain "poorly understood".

In response, these authors devise "an actor-based theoretical framework for understanding how international development policy, as a subfield of a country's foreign policy is made" (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 13), using Alison's bureaucratic politics model as a platform. It follows that these authors conceive of aid policy-making "as a bureaucratic negotiation game within the government" (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 23) involving three key sets of interactions: international actors and national governments; domestic stakeholders and national governments; between government agencies (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 32). As I discuss in more detail below, Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi's study points beyond the second wave in important ways, especially in the way the theoretical framework employed is both actor-based and focused on domestic decisionmaking processes. Nonetheless, this study can be categorised with other second-image focused 'second-wave' studies on account of its finding that variation in aid policy trajectories of ECE states needed to explained by two key domestic reasons:

⁴⁴ The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

“differences in the influence of national NGOs, and different dynamics within governments” (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 173).

2.2.3 Evaluating the ‘Domestic Determinants’ Framework

The same basic proposition informs the ‘domestic determinants’ of aid scholarship: to explain the complexity of aid policy, it is imperative to move beyond the hitherto dominant and reductionist selfish-selfless framework and examine domestic politics and processes. In keeping with the trajectory of their discipline, International Relations scholars studying aid in the post-Cold War period became increasingly inclined to open the black box of the state to better explain how states interacted in world politics.

Scholars were drawn to consider second-image factors because of the mismatch between empirical observations of and theoretical explanations offered by existing literature. As Jervis has explained, “[t]o argue that the international environment determines a state’s behaviour is to assert that all states react similarly to the same objective external situation” (Jervis 1976, 18). Yet states experiencing similar external situations often adopt divergent aid policies. As I noted in the chapter 1, this is the manifestly the case in my three case study states. It was even more emphatically the case in the five ECE states examined by Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 173).

The logical analytical step to take when third-image theories do not explain variation is to assume that the sources of variation are domestic⁴⁵. In essence, this describes the reaction of the International Relations discipline in the aftermath of the Cold War, an event which led to a deep questioning of the dominant actor-general theory —theory that focusses “on the state as a unitary actor and systemic as well as relational variables as determinants of action” (V. M. Hudson and Vore 1995, 210). The same questioning was apparent in in the International Relations scholarship examining aid. As van der Veen (2011, 21) would later write, the existing variation in aid policy across states and over time “is greater than can be explained with most conventional models of foreign aid, which privilege the diametrically opposed motivations of self-interest and altruism.”⁴⁶

⁴⁵ The explanatory shortcomings of system-level theories, explains Hook, requires opening the “black box” of domestic politics. (Hook 2008b, 153).

⁴⁶ Similarly, van der Veen (2011, 36) notes that “[w]hen domestic or international constraints are tight, liberal or realist variables can predict policy outcomes quite accurately. However, this is not always the case, and in the context of development assistance it is only rarely so”.

Yet breaking apart “the monolithic view of nation-states as unitary actors” (V. M. Hudson and Vore 1995, 210) incurred costs. ‘Dropping down’ from the level of systemic theory adds “much detail to the analysis of [International Relations]” (V. M. Hudson and Vore 1995, 211), and hence reduces the prospects of developing elegant and parsimonious theory. Given how unsatisfying the dominant selfish-selfless framework had become, this was a price many scholars of aid were willing to pay. In fact, as I have described, a key motivation of these scholars was to provide more expansive and nuanced accounts of aid policy dynamics. These scholars were eager to move away from merely identifying *what* factors mattered in shaping aid-giving behaviour (the focus of the pre-Cold War literature), to examining *how* these factors influenced aid policy choices. They were also much more interested in explaining aid policy *change*, something systemic-level theories did not facilitate.

Although clearly an over-simplification, a helpful heuristic for understanding the determinants of aid literature is to view the pre-Cold War contributions as preoccupied with system-level factors and the post-Cold contributions period as comparatively much more concerned with domestic factors. What is clear is that the two dominant approaches I have outlined to this point in the chapter maintain conflicting stances about what level of analysis should be prioritised in the analysis. As we have seen throughout the current section, the strong recent trend, is that the second image is the “appropriate level of analysis” (Jervis 1976, 21) for examining the aid policy issue area. Despite this trend, the ‘domestic politics turn’ in aid scholarship has not fully resolved an underlying lack of theoretical confidence about which levels of analysis matters and when for aid policy. The level of analysis problem is not unique to the study of foreign aid, of course— it has been puzzling scholars of international relations for a long time (Singer 1961). Nonetheless, this problem has proven especially prickly for scholars of aid, and remains so.

Almost three decades ago, Putnam (1988, 427) observed how, “domestic politics and international relations are often somehow entangled, but our theories have no yet sorted out the puzzling tangle.” This description remains an extremely pertinent one concerning scholarly understandings of aid. Moreover, inherent in Putnam’s observation is a diagnosis for the theoretical paucity of the aid literature. International Relations scholars have tended to examine aid through either third image *or* second image lenses. The interaction *between* levels of analysis—the ‘puzzling tangle’ part of the Putnam’s equation—has rarely been the focus of investigation. Viewed from this perspective, each of the frameworks that dominate the determinants of aid literature are similarly exclusionary—they differ merely on what level of analysis should be the focus of attention. The implication for the question this thesis addresses, therefore, is that each of the main frameworks offered by the determinants of aid literature can

provide only partial explanations for why Australia, the UK, and the Netherlands each recently changed the trajectory of their aid policy.

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2.3 Conclusion

At the outset of the post-Cold War era, Steven Hook (1993, 44) noted how “[s]cholarly research has tackled discrete and disconnected pieces of the aid puzzle, but ultimately has failed to join them”. A quarter-century later, this assessment remains an accurate description of the literature. The determinants of aid literature has focused on generating better understandings of discrete determinants of aid originating at a single level of analysis, rather than developing better understandings of the interrelationship *between* determinants, especially between determinants residing at different levels of analysis. The narrow focus of both the existing frameworks for explaining aid policy change mean they are capable of providing only partial explanations of aid policy choices.

The ongoing concern of the determinants of aid literature has been to ascertain “which motivating factors have been of greatest importance in the formulation and implementation of... ‘foreign aid disbursement’ policies” (Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998, 295). This chapter has argued that, in seeking to identify these motivating factors, International Relations scholars have tended to adopt one of two approaches, and that these approaches employ frameworks that give primacy to either third *or* second image explanatory factors.

This chapter has emphasised how the trajectory of the determinants of aid literature reflects the trajectory of the discipline of which it is a part. What we see is a theoretical and analytical progression from the ‘outside in’—that is, a shift in focus from explanatory factors outside of the state to factors inside of them. Yet despite the presence of this general outside-in trajectory, the determinants of aid literature scholarship remains almost entirely devoid of individual actor-based accounts of aid policy change. So, while an ‘outside-in’ outside trajectory is clearly evident, there remains scope for this trajectory to be extended to include first image explanations for why states give aid⁴⁷. Indeed, as Fuchs and Dreher (2017:3) point out, the

⁴⁷ The few individual-actor-based accounts of aid policy that do exist tend to be in related disciplines such as development studies or public administration. Even then, these accounts tend to point out the influence of a high-profile politician responsible for the development portfolio, such as Clare Short (Vereker 2002; Morrissey 2002;

literature “barely touches on the role of the decision-makers responsible for the provision of development assistance.”

What I found in conducting my research, however, was that individual leaders *are* crucial in initiating and sustaining aid policy change. The importance of individual actors was widely acknowledged by those participating in and observing aid policy decisionmaking. Kevin Rudd was uniformly viewed as crucial to the Australian aid spending expansion. David Cameron and Andrew Mitchell were regularly cited as pivotal to the UK’s achievement of the 0.7% target. And Clare Short’s reforms were highlighted by almost every interviewee I spoke with, including those outside the UK.

Given this, how do we construct a framework that can capture and test this importance? And if the existing frameworks operate from the outside-in, can this approach be reversed in order to view the individual as the locus of cause, rather than the external environment? In the forthcoming chapter, I demonstrate that, by making use of key insights from the foreign policy analysis literature, such a reversal is indeed possible.

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Barder 2007) or Jan Pronk (van Gastel and Nuijten 2005), as a sidenote of a larger or more central enquiry. In short, there has virtually no systematic, dedicated work done on how individual-level dynamics at the political leadership level influence why state’s gives aid. The contributions I am aware of which fit this description include Bruening (2013), Joanna Spratt’s (2017) doctoral thesis and the aid-related aspects of Joshua Busby’s work on how moral movements impact foreign policy (Busby 2007;2010).

3 Approach and Methodology: Constructing a Multilevel Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework

Scholarly research has tackled discrete and disconnected pieces of the aid puzzle, but ultimately has failed to join them.

—Steven Hook, 1993

[I]t is ultimately impossible to explain all of international relations by resort to only one of the three images.

—Byman and Pollack, 2001

All attempts to describe and explain human behavior require that what has already transpired be recaptured – not in all its original detail, but selectively according to a scheme employed by the reporter or observer.

—Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin, 1962.

This chapter describes how I constructed and applied a multilevel aid policy decisionmaking framework in response to the critique made in the previous chapter. The choice to devote an entire chapter to methodology-related issues reflects a conviction that methodological innovation constitutes a significant part of this thesis' contribution to new knowledge. Furthermore, the process of applying the aid policy decisionmaking framework to reconstruct a series of aid policy decisionmaking episodes paved the way for the inductively-driven theory construction this thesis undertakes (addressed in chapter 4).

Analysing foreign policy from a decisionmaking perspective is certainly not new. Nor is the desire to develop multilevel frameworks for examining foreign policy decisions (Garrison 2003, 154; Gustavsson 1998, 198; V. M. Hudson 2014, 7; Rosenau 1987, 1; Yetiv 2011a). Where this thesis breaks new methodological ground is by engaging in these two familiar scholarly endeavours simultaneously on the unfamiliar terrain of aid policy decisionmaking. In other words, my methodological innovation derives from treating aid policy as a *sui generis* issue area and then seeking to examine discrete aid policy decisionmaking episodes through a multilevel lens (refer Hook 1995, xiii).

This chapter comprises four sections. In the first section, I show how multilevel integration has only been pursued to a limited degree within the literature studying aid. By documenting how the Comparative Aid Policy Literature has sought to ‘join up’ the discrete pieces of the aid puzzle, we see that, even in the most ambitious cases, the individual level of analysis has been set aside in order to reveal how factors from the second and third levels of analysis influence aid policy. On the other hand, despite multilevel integration not having been or realised—or even pursued—in a comprehensive, explicit fashion, there are obvious signs that aid scholars are inherently aware of the benefits that such an approach could yield, provided the attendant methodological constraints could be overcome.

In the second section of the chapter, I explain how I mobilise theoretical insights from FPA to construct a multilevel aid policy decisionmaking framework which incorporates factors from all levels of analysis. In particular, I elaborate on the core conceptual insight that powers my ‘recapturing scheme’; the idea that the individual decisionmaker acts as the “locus of theoretical integration across levels of analysis” (V. M. Hudson 2002, 5). By depicting how individual decisionmakers mediate between constraints operating simultaneously at different levels of analysis, the framework serves as a visual depiction of how I *conceptualise* aid policy decisionmaking to operate.

The framework also operates as a *methodological* device. In the third section of the chapter, I show how the aid policy decisionmaking framework catalogues six variables of ‘theoretical interest’ (George and Bennett 2005, 69), thereby ensuring they are systematically considered during the process of recreating the decisionmaking episode at hand. The framework’s chief methodological function, therefore, is to foreground those factors likely to influence aid policy change.

The concluding section of the chapter is dedicated to explaining, in practical terms, how I applied the framework to reconstruct aid policy decisionmaking episodes. My chief task here is to document the process by which I used causal process tracing to transform six ‘reconstructions’ of aid policy decisionmaking episodes into the explanations of aid policy change presented in Part II of the thesis.

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3.1 The Comparative Aid Policy Literature: Towards Multilevel Integration?

I argued in chapter 2 that the determinants of aid literature has concentrated on generating better understandings of discrete determinants of aid, rather than paying attention to developing better understandings of the interrelationship *between* determinants of aid, especially between determinants residing at different levels of analysis. This idea is neatly conveyed in the Hook epigraph commencing this chapter: “[s]cholarly research has tackled discrete and disconnected pieces of the aid puzzle, but ultimately has failed to join them” (Hook 1993, 44). However, while Hook’s assessment remains accurate, some attempts towards ‘joining up’ determinants from multiple levels of analysis have been made, particularly over the past two decades.

In this opening section of the chapter, I review these steps, focusing on how scholars I identified as epitomising the comparative aid policy subliteration have approached the ‘joining up’ process (refer Table 2.B). This review makes it clear that, while multilevel integration has only been pursued to a limited degree, there is a latent recognition within the literature that such an approach would be valuable if it could be fully implemented. In sum, I argue that while the literature gestures towards multilevel integration, it has not actively pursued it or entirely understood the benefits of this approach, in large part because of the methodological challenges it entails.

3.1.1 The State of the ‘Joining Up’ Process

A defining characteristic of the comparative aid policy subliteration is its insistence that domestic factors must be added to international factors if aid policy choices are to be properly understood. As I argued in chapter 2, this characteristic of the comparative aid policy

subliterature emerged as a conscious response to the international level orientation of the dominant selfish-selfless framework. What this means is that the comparative aid policy literature naturally inclines toward multilevel integration to some degree. Yet, as I now move to show, the extent to which comparative aid policy scholars have been explicit about this objective, and the methodologies they embrace to realise it, vary significantly.

Lancaster's approach was to acknowledge the role of international factors, but to proactively bracket them off for the purposes of her study. Lancaster resists specifying a theoretical model that conceptualises the "relationship between domestic and international influences over foreign aid" (Lancaster 2007a, 8), justifying this decision by arguing that "[t]here are too many interacting variables to justify a model that would be both parsimonious and insightful" (Lancaster 2007a, 9)⁴⁸. Instead, Lancaster organises her study around "four categories of domestic political forces shaping foreign aid" (Lancaster 2007a, 18). Yet, by her own admission, the choice to exclude international factors from her framework limits its explanatory power. "International events, trends, and pressures are important sources of change," concedes Lancaster (2007a, 222) at the conclusion of her study, before noting how these forces of change "often work through domestic political forces, and those forces also produce change, independent of what is going on beyond their borders."⁴⁹ So, while Lancaster sees international factors as important, the model she provides does not capture them, or explain how they interact with domestic political forces.

Lundsgaarde rejects Lancaster's approach, examining aid through the lens of an explicitly multilevel framework (Lundsgaarde 2013, 187). To generate "leverage for understanding aid choices across countries", Lundsgaarde builds a model to include a combination of "societal-level and state-level variables" Using this model, Lundsgaarde (2013, 4) sets out to address a critical gap in the determinants of aid scholarship, which he recognises "does not attempt to explain where donor motivations originate". Lundsgaarde's study skilfully demonstrates how donor motivations are generated within institutions. However, he largely overlooks the possibility that donor motivations first originate in the minds of the individuals who populate these institutions.

⁴⁸ It is significant that most other comparative aid policy scholars reject the notion of not specifying a model, often citing Lancaster in the process. Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 14) are amongst those who do so explicitly: "[w]e disagree with Lancaster and think that theoretical models are necessary in order to better understand the drivers of why aid policies differ among donors and to allow meaningful comparisons." Lancaster's approach is also challenged by Lundsgaarde (2013, 7).

⁴⁹ Lancaster also implicitly acknowledges the importance of international factors when she critiques existing theoretical approaches because they do not fully "capture the interplay of domestic and international influences over aid's purposes" (Lancaster 2007a, 9).

Breuning (1992, 1995) and van der Veen (2011) both seek to understand why states give aid through the lens of parliamentary debates. In the sense that coding parliamentary debates captures the perspectives of individual parliamentarians, one could arguably claim that these studies incorporate individual level perspectives. However, the sheer volume of material collected in these studies—Breuning analyses fifteen years of debates, while van der Veen analyses fifty—mutes the ability to detect the influence of any individual decisionmaker. This does not concern these scholars because the fundamental reason they are coding parliamentary debates is to reveal which foreign aid policy ‘role’ was prevalent at a particular time (Breuning), or to ascertain dominant ‘frames’ that governed aid decisionmaking at a particular time (van der Veen). These scholars are focussed on explaining the impact of domestically-formed preferences on aid decisionmaking over extended periods, rather than uncovering the reasons why specific aid policy decisions were reached.

As Van Belle, Rioux and Potter (2004, 17) observed in the mid-2000s, “there are few efforts to explicitly apply foreign policy decision-making models to the study of foreign aid.” A notable exception is the recent work of Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi. These authors appropriate one of the best-known frameworks to emerge from FPA—Allison’s ‘government politics’ model—in their study of aid policy in EEC countries, and adapt it for use in explaining aid policy decisionmaking by incorporating relevant international actors that influence aid policy (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, chapter 2)⁵⁰. As a result, Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 32) limit their focus to “[t]hree key sets of interactions: (1) international actors and national governments; (2) domestic stakeholders and national governments; (3) between government agencies.” So, while Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi push the comparative aid policy scholarship forward in key ways, especially by paying close attention to *interactions* between levels of analysis, they accomplish this by setting aside the individual level of analysis. It is therefore instructive that these authors make a point of highlighting how they were consistently directed towards the special role played by Šimon Pánek in transforming Czech development assistance while conducting their research (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 140). This suggests that there are indeed times when individual actors *are* consequential in driving major aid policy change.

3.1.2 Explaining the Absence of the Individual Level of Analysis

Why have scholars been so reluctant to include individual level factors in models explaining why states give aid? Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi give voice to the major reason when, despite acknowledging they would like to expand their model to incorporate variables beyond

⁵⁰ Specifically, the EU, the UNDP and the OECD (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 24).

bureaucratic politics, they admit that doing so “would increase the complexity of the model, potentially to a point where it would no longer be manageable” (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 177). In short, incorporating individual level factors into a model, while still accounting for domestic and international level factors, rapidly becomes a complex enterprise. As Van Belle, Rioux and Potter (2004, 18) have acknowledged, “[p]art of the difficulty in bringing the foreign policy analysis literature to bear on the aid question and part of the reason its use has been limited might be the sheer magnitude of the task.”⁵¹ Inevitably, any impulse that seeks to generate more complete explanations for why states give aid needs to be balanced against the information requirements that this requires.

Van Belle, Rioux and Potter’s study is also methodologically interesting. These authors frame their study as an effort at theoretical integration. However, rather than striving for *multilevel* integration, these authors are predominantly concerned with achieving integration across ‘areas of study’—namely foreign aid policy making, media studies, and bureaucratic processes. This multidisciplinary focus explains why this study defies easy categorisation, as its authors readily admit (Van Belle, Rioux, and Potter 2004, 1–2). The study employs the ‘domestic political imperatives model of foreign policy decision-making’ developed by Van Belle (1993). While the practical effect of adopting this model is to focus the analysis on domestic factors, given that the model is concerned with locating the power blocs constituting a democratically-elected leader’s support base, individual level considerations are not entirely removed from the account.

Steven Hook, easily the most prominent and consistent proponent of the need to examine aid from a multilevel perspective has not been deterred by these methodological challenges⁵². His excellent and unique study of the emergence of the Millennium Challenge Account (Hook 2008b) represents the most comprehensive multilevel explanation of an aid policy decision in the literature—in the sense that it countenances influences from the individual, domestic and international levels of analysis. However, the incorporation of individual level factors is relatively fleeting, as Hook focuses more on explaining how “principled and causal beliefs that were widely circulated... prior to [George W. Bush] administration’s coming to power” (Hook 2008b, 162)

⁵¹ The overwhelming information burden required to produce multilevel explanations of foreign policy was a major reason why the comparative foreign policy project broke down in the late 1980s. For a detailed explanation of this, see Hudson (2014, 28–31).

⁵² It should come as no surprise that Hook is an FPA scholar, best known as the author of *U.S. Foreign Policy: The Paradox of World Power*, a widely used textbook now in its fifth edition (Hook 2017). Hook’s lengthiest consideration of the need to understand aid from a multilevel perspective remains his doctoral thesis (Hook 1993). In a section tracing the history of FPA, he argued that “[w]e still seek an increased understanding of foreign policy behavior across spatial and temporal lines, and to understand the relative impacts of individuals, governmental institutions societal and systemic influences” (Hook 1993, 63). Hook’s doctoral work consciously sought to apply this sensibility to the study of foreign aid.

were transmitted through domestic structures and then on to the executive, aided by a 'policy window' that facilitated change (Kingdon 1995).

It is methodologically significant that Hook generated his multilevel explanation by reducing the complexity of his study in two key ways. First, he focused on explaining a *specific* aid policy decision. Second, he used a single case methodology⁵³. Hook (2008b, 163) acknowledges that this methodology means his study "can only be suggestive of broader patterns of foreign policy change". Nevertheless, Hook's account stands as a positive outlier, a singular example of the impressive explanatory power of a multilevel approach when applied to interrogating a defined aid policy decision. This thesis builds on this example, devising a framework to facilitate systematic comparison of aid policy decisionmaking episodes within and across states.

3.1.3 Unrealised Aspiration: Gestures towards Multilevel Integration

In reviewing how the comparative aid policy literature has tackled the 'joining up' process, the message of chapter 2 has been reinforced: the determinants of aid literature defaults to focussing on factors from one level of analysis at a time. Multilevel integration has not been realised in a comprehensive way. Nor is it widely acknowledged as an important pursuit, or an overtly recognised objective of research. Yet despite this lack of public recognition, this subsection argues that the comparative aid policy literature does, in fact, inherently recognise the prospective value of examining aid policy dynamics with a multilevel lens, even if it does not explicitly couch it in those terms. In making this case, I hone in on three important indicators.

The first indicator is that comparative aid policy scholars are united in their recognition that to adequately explain aid policy requires employing a *multifaceted* lens. There is widespread appreciation that aid dynamics are not captured with existing frameworks. And there is agreement that traditional International Relations theories do not yield a great deal of explanatory purchase when applied to the aid issue area, at least when these theories are deployed in isolation. . Lancaster (2007b, 4), for example, argues that none of the mainstream "theories of international politics explain adequately the complexities of aid's purposes." In response, scholars are cognisant of the benefits of new, hybrid approaches. To illustrate, Hook (2008b, 149) has made the case that, in the case of aid, only a "theoretical synthesis [of rationalist and constructivist theory]... facilitates a comprehensive understanding of foreign

⁵³ Hook (2008b, 163) acknowledges that his single case methodology means his study "can only be suggestive of broader patterns of foreign policy change".

policy behaviour [sic] in discrete instances that is otherwise unattainable through the use of a single analytic lens.”

When scholars *have* developed new frameworks with which to examine aid giving behaviour, they have been reluctant to explain them as efforts to ‘join up’ determinants of aid from different levels of analysis (Steven Hook being the most notable exception)⁵⁴. This lack of specificity about theoretical objectives forms a second indicator of a largely unrecognised appetite for multilevel integration. As I have documented, numerous aid scholars do, in fact, accomplish multilevel integration to a degree. However, in almost every case, the interaction between levels of analysis is not explicitly modelled and is not the key focus of the study. The ‘puzzling tangle’ component of the aid policy story (to use Putnam’s language) is not interrogated systematically and is usually left to blend into the background. Part of the reason for this is that the limited scholarship that does treat aid policy decisionmaking as a distinct realm “has only sparingly relied on theoretical models” to guide the analysis of aid choices (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 8)⁵⁵.

To the extent that multilevel integration has been demonstrated by comparative aid policy scholars, it has only been shown to functionally occur between the second and third levels of analysis (in particular by the work of Lundsgaarde (2013) and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015)). The comparative aid policy literature is yet to take a self-conscious ‘step down’ to the first level of analysis. Even so, evidence is beginning to emerge that shows individual actors can and do influence aid policy decisions. I noted earlier how Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 140) recently documented Šimon Pánek’s influence on Czech aid policy, while Hook (2008b) has shown how President George W. Bush’s beliefs contribution to the creation of the Millennium Challenge Account). The growing acknowledgement of the influence of individual actors on aid policy in the literature represents a third indicator that deeper multilevel integration is required to deliver fuller explanations of state’s aid giving behaviour.

Rather than continuing to gesture at multilevel integration, the comparative aid policy literature would benefit from fully embracing this approach, bringing it into line with the foreign policy analysis literature. Garrison (2003, 154) has observed how “[i]t is now broadly accepted that different levels of analysis—individual factors, inputs into the decision process, and institutional

⁵⁴ The work of Noël and Thérien is an outlier in this regard. These authors position their study as “a contribution to the analysis of the links between the domestic and the international orders” (Noël and Thérien 1995, 524).

⁵⁵ Most notably Carol Lancaster (2007a), eschewed adopting a theoretical framework to guide her highly influential study *Foreign Aid: Diplomacy, Development, Domestic Politics*, arguing that “there are too many interacting variables to justify a model that would be both parsimonious and insightful” (Lancaster 2007a, 9). This approach is challenged by both Lundsgaarde (2013, 7) and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 13–14).

as well as cultural and society factors—converge to shape foreign policy outputs.” The father of comparative foreign policy, James Rosenau (1987, 1), made the same basic point even earlier:

Where students of local politics tend to hold the national scene constant, where students of national politics tend to do the same for the international scene, and where students of world politics tend to treat subnational variables as constants, those who study foreign policy must, perforce, concern themselves with politics at every level...

While such logic is embraced within the FPA subdiscipline, the implications of it have yet to be digested by the comparative aid policy scholarship. This is despite the three indicators outlined above pointing to the fact that the need for a multilevel lens to examine aid is at least subconsciously recognised by numerous comparative aid policy scholars.

Provided one accepts the premise that those who study aid policy must “concern themselves with politics at every level”, the next challenge is how to practically accomplish this. This is the challenge to which I turn in the next section of the chapter. In approaching this task, I draw on the Foreign Policy Analysis literature. As Van Belle, Rioux and Potter (2004, 16–17) have pointed out, “the empirical and theoretical literature on foreign policy analysis has not been fully exploited for what it can lend to the study of foreign aid.” In my case, I construct a multilevel framework by exploiting FPA’s notion that, in *practice*, the integration process takes place within the minds of individual decisionmakers, rather than at the abstract level of the state. In summary, this thesis builds on the foundations provided by the comparative aid policy subliterature, seeking to contribute to it by drawing on insights from the FPA literature.

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3.2 Constructing a Multilevel Framework: Bringing in FPA

In this section of the chapter, I explain how I mobilise theoretical insights from FPA to construct a multilevel aid policy decisionmaking framework. In particular, I elaborate on the core conceptual insight that powers my ‘recapturing scheme’; the idea that the individual decisionmaker acts as the “locus of theoretical integration across levels of analysis” (V. M. Hudson 2002, 5). Appropriating this insight from FPA and applying it to the study of aid allows the generation of new, more complete explanations for why states change the trajectory of their aid policy.

In the language of the epigraph from Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin (1962, 22), the framework is the scheme I used to *selectively* recapture and recreate ‘what went on’ during the decisionmaking episodes I examined. The framework promotes a particular way of looking at the problem, functioning as a ‘locating device’ that shows an observer ‘where to look’ when examining aid policy decisionmaking dynamics. This section of the chapter is largely devoted to introducing the aid policy decisionmaking framework and then specifying it in detail. To begin with, however, it is important to explain how a key insight from FPA forms the crucial building block of a multilevel framework.

3.2.1 FPA and Theoretical Integration

Since its emergence as a subdiscipline of International Relations, FPA has been a “radically integrative” venture (V. M. Hudson 2014, 7). FPA’s penchant for theoretical integration takes on numerous forms. For example, FPA scholars have been especially open to incorporating insights from other disciplines (interdisciplinary integration). They have been unusually willing to “utilize theory and findings from across the spectrum of social science” (V. M. Hudson 2014, 43). Increasingly, FPA scholars have also advocated for further theoretical integration between FPA and International Relations (intra-disciplinary integration)⁵⁶. Yet perhaps the defining integrative reflex of the FPA subdiscipline over its history, and certainly the most pertinent for the present discussion, is its desire to integrate across levels of analysis (multilevel integration). As Hudson (2014, 7) has noted, a hallmark of FPA is that “it views the explanation of foreign policy decision making as multifactorial, with the desideratum of examining variables from more than one level of analysis”⁵⁷. In fact, Hudson (2007, 165) has gone further, arguing that “the true promise” of FPA is “theoretical integration: the integration of theory across... several levels to develop a more complete perspective on foreign policy decisionmaking”.

Elsewhere, Hudson (2002, 5) has explained that it is the *individual decisionmaker* that functions as the site of theoretical integration⁵⁸. How is this the case? Decision-based theory “circumvents the levels-of-analysis problem entirely” because “decision makers can take their cue from any level of analysis”, explains Welch (2005, 22). Rather than being predisposed to privileging factors emerging from a certain level of analysis, decisionmakers act without conscious reference to

⁵⁶ See, for example, the recent work of Cantir and Kaarbo (2012) and Kaarbo (2015).

⁵⁷ Likewise, Kaarbo (2015, 191) has recently emphasised how “FPA research tends to focus on explaining governments’ foreign policy decisions through specified factors at multiple levels of analysis”.

⁵⁸ FPA isolates the human decision-maker as the “point of theoretical intersection between the most important determinants of state behaviour: material and ideational factors” (Hudson 2002, 3).

where a pressure or constraint originates⁵⁹. As Putnam (1988, 431) highlighted in his seminal paper on two-level games, “central decision-makers... must be concerned *simultaneously* with domestic and international pressures” (emphasis mine).

During a decisionmaking episode, therefore, the subjective understandings of individual decisionmakers act like a funnel, collecting and then sorting amongst competing pressures to arrive at a decision (Kaarbo 2015, 191). What this means is that “the nature of the problem—and, indeed, whether one exists at all—depends on policymakers’ perceptions” (M. G. Hermann 2001, 53)⁶⁰. Rosati, for example, (2000, 47) acknowledges the need to assume “individuals are likely to view their environment differently and operate within their own ‘psychological environment’”⁶¹. Taking this logic further, if we assume—as the FPA subdiscipline has since its inception—that “state action is the action taken by those acting in the name of the state” (R. C. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002, 59), then it follows that “[t]o explain a decision to change policy, the characteristics of the environmental stimuli must be understood in terms of how they are perceived by policymakers” (C. F. Hermann 1990, 15).

An aid policy decision that emerges from a given decisionmaking episode can therefore be considered as representing a temporary equilibrium between competing constraints, as determined by those decisionmakers acting in the name of the state in the realm of aid policy. Aid policy decisionmakers, to extend Putnam’s idea, are engaged in what might be called a ‘three-level game’⁶². Not only will they weigh environmental stimuli emerging from the domestic and international levels when making a decision, they will also inevitably factor in their own personal views on aid. As Hudson (2014, 204) recognises, decisionmakers are somehow “integrating variables at many different levels of analysis in order to make a decision”.

At this point, I should clarify that by conceiving of an aid policy decision as representing a temporary equilibrium, I am not equating the behaviour of individual decisionmakers involved in an aid policy decision with the way the market is theorised to operate in economics. There is

⁵⁹ Welch (2005, 23) goes on to explain how, in making a decision “leaders must evaluate their environment in the light of their values and goals, identify a set of options, and make a choice from among those options. This is true whether they concern themselves primarily with strategic, domestic political, governmental, cultural, normative, or other factors...”

⁶⁰ Elsewhere, Margaret Hermann (2001, 53) explains this idea in a slightly different way: “different policymakers, and different governments, may observe the same state of affairs but recognize distinctive problems or no problem at all.”

⁶¹ Rosati acknowledges borrowing this term from Harold Sprout and Margaret Sprout (1965), from their book *The Ecological Perspective on Human Affairs*.

⁶² Lee Ann Patterson (1997) employed the concept of a three-level game in her study of negotiations over agricultural policy reform in the European Community. However, Patterson’s analysis left out the individual level of analysis, instead concentrating on the interaction of negotiations at the domestic level, the EC level, and the international level (1997, 135).

no invisible hand at work during an aid policy decisionmaking episode that ensures constraints are automatically sifted by the actors involved in a way that ensures the most efficient or optimal outcome is reached. Instead, I assume that aid policy decisionmaking processes are profoundly *political* in the sense that the individuals involved are required to make *choices* between competing priorities. The nature of these choices will invariably be a product of the individuals involved, decision unit dynamics, domestic political imperatives, and international forces. And these competing constraints will be sifted and ordered uniquely at different points in time.

The most likely critique of situating individual decisionmakers as the conceptual engine of an integrated framework is this: the range of possible decisions emerging from a given decisionmaking process is as varied as the number of potential decisionmakers. If each individual decisionmaker responds to constraints in a unique manner and exercises agency in a unique way, proceeds such a critique, then it will be impossible to detect generalisable patterns in how aid policy choices are made. Robert Jervis has responded to such a critique by arguing that this ‘cognitive approach’ assumes that “perceptions of the world and of other actors diverge from reality in patterns that we can detect and for reasons that we can understand” (Rosati 2000, 52).

Essentially, what Jervis is saying is that there are reasons to expect to find patterns in the outworking of human cognition when it comes to foreign policy (as indeed in any other realm of decisionmaking). This reality was powerfully demonstrated by Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman in their groundbreaking and extraordinarily influential work in the late 1960s and 1970s on judgement and decisionmaking (most notably Tversky and Kahneman 1974). (For an excellent recent overview of this work and the field generally, see Kahneman 2011). A working assumption adopted at the outset of this project was that there is something innate about aid policy which produces its own political calculus. The very things that make aid policy distinct are the constraints this issue area presents for decisionmakers *across* jurisdictions. In other words, I am assuming that aid policy subsystems operate according to very similar ‘rules of the game’ not only across the three rich Western states this thesis is concerned with, but also across other similar states⁶³. (See further in section 4.4).

⁶³ This assumption is consistent with the approach of other research in comparative aid policy, including Lundsgaarde (2013), Hook (1993, 1995) and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015). Lundsgaarde’s excellent discussion on aid as an ‘issue area’ was particularly influential in shaping my thinking on this matter (Lundsgaarde 2013, 21–24). For a broader discussion on issue areas and foreign policy, see Potter (1980).

3.2.2 Introducing my Recapturing Scheme

Owing to the “[t]he number and complexity of factors that influence national action in the international system” (R. C. Snyder 1962, 5), there is inescapable need to impose “some form of second-order intellectual ‘structure’” (Carlsnaes 2012, 114) on the “exceedingly messy first-order domain of foreign policy making as an empirical object of study”. Such an intellectual structure inevitably does important locating work. It positions the observer to examine empirical evidence in a particular way by providing a way to organise and understand information. Most foreign policy analysis scholarship proceeds by posing a question at a particular level of analysis (Neack 2014, 11)⁶⁴, a tendency that is reflected in the limited FPA scholarship on aid. In my case, however, I have consciously sought to ‘widen out’ from this conventional approach and develop an ‘integrated’ framework—an intellectual structure that avoids privileging factors emerging from a particular level of analysis.

As I raised in the previous subsection, the perspective of ‘inhabiting’ the thought process of individual decisionmakers—and seeking to identify and understand the combination of pressures that motivate their choices—offers a unique analytic lens for identifying ‘what mattered’ in leading to a certain aid policy decision. Examining aid policy decisionmaking through such a lens does not automatically prejudice factors originating from only one level of analysis. In other words, such lens facilitates the establishment of a multilevel framework.

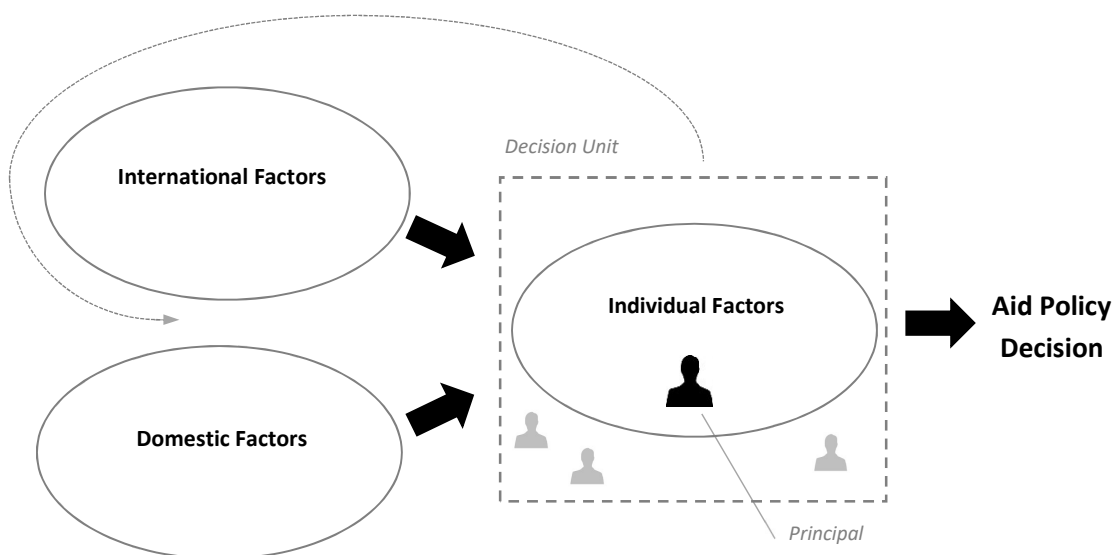
This ‘inhabiting’ idea is the concept that animates the aid policy decisionmaking framework presented in Figure 3.A below. My chosen recapturing scheme “focus[es] on explaining the choice of specific policies” and views these policies “as resulting from” a decisionmaking process (Carlsnaes 2012, 118)⁶⁵. The framework shows how international, domestic and individual level factors are all ‘funnelled’ by decisionmakers when arriving at an aid policy decision. It depicts how an **aid policy decision** is the result of a process in which a group of **individual decisionmakers**, responsible to a **principal** and operating within the context of a **decision unit**, respond to, and mediate amongst, an array of international, domestic, and individual factors during an **aid policy decisionmaking episode**. (I specify the terms highlighted in bold in greater detail in subsection 3.2.3 below. (These terms are also included in the Glossary).

⁶⁴ As Neack (2014, 9–11) explains, scholars are generally willing to focus their question on a pre-determined level of analysis, and to accept that the understandings such studies generate will be limited, in large part because it means the study becomes easier to manage.

⁶⁵ A key assumption of this framework, like most in the literature, is that “governments change their foreign policy through a decision process” (C. F. Hermann 1990, 13).

My aid policy decisionmaking framework refines a model Gustavsson (1998, 1999) has advanced to explain foreign policy change. Gustavsson was conscious of developing a multilevel model and sought to depict an “approach to foreign policy change that observes the combined importance of international and domestic structural conditions, political agency, and the decision-making process” (Gustavsson 1998, 198). Gustavsson (1999, 83) describes his model as comprising three steps: identification of “a number of ‘sources’ that are mediated by ‘individual decision-makers’ who act within the ‘decision-making process’ in order to bring about a change in policy.” This sequencing is also embedded in my framework. As well drawing closely from Gustavsson’s model, my framework echoes the integrated foreign policy analysis frameworks advanced by Charles Hermann (1990, 13) and, more recently, Mintz and DeRouen (2010, 3) in that it is a “composite, multilevel model where all factors are present” (Beach 2012, 33). The framework also incorporates a definition of the ‘authoritative decision unit’ drawn from a project led by Charles Hermann, Margaret Hermann, and Joe D. Hagan⁶⁶.

Figure 3.A: Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework



My recapturing scheme differs from the two most developed aid policy decisionmaking frameworks presently offered by the literature—those recently advanced by Lundsgaarde (2013) and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015)—in terms of the scope of factors it seeks to incorporate. As I discussed in section 3.1, this pair of existing frameworks are anchored at the domestic level of analysis⁶⁷, reflecting the recent focus of the determinants of aid literature. My

⁶⁶ A key output of this project was a special issue of *International Studies Review* (Volume 3, Issue 2, Summer 2001). My framework draws most heavily on Margaret Hermann’s contribution (2001) to this special issue.

⁶⁷ Lundsgaarde’s framework hones in “characteristics of actors engaged in the aid arena [which he refers to as societal level variables] and the qualities of the institutional setting in which aid decisions are made [state level variables] represent key determinants of aid choices” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 186). Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi argue that explaining divergent aid policy trajectories observed in East Central European (ECE) states is best achieved by employing a governmental politics approach.

desire to actively account for the potential role of individual level factors in influencing aid policy decisionmaking, alongside domestic and international level factors, substantially ‘widens out’ the range of factors the framework incorporates. Such an approach offers the potential for a more holistic and explanation of recent aid policy decisions. However, such a ‘widening out’ necessitates a ‘narrowing in’ of the scope of the framework some other respect (see Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 14). That is, methodological choices which bring illumination and clarity to one aspect of the decisionmaking process inevitably result in other aspects moving into the shadows.

In my case, the ‘narrowing in’ occurs chiefly in relation to the timeframe over which the framework retains relevance. Whereas the frameworks advanced by Lundsgaarde and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi are applicable over periods of a decade or more, my framework retains its fidelity over a much shorter time horizon. It is specifically designed to be used to explain discreet aid policy decisionmaking episodes, which typically last only a matter of months. The upshot of this narrowing in, however, is that my framework is capable producing very detailed analyses of these narrow slices of time⁶⁸.

The benefit of producing such a fine-grained analysis is that it has the potential to reveal, to a greater extent than existing accounts, the interwoven motivations and rationales of aid policy decisionmakers. Once potentially salient factors are uncovered, causal process tracing can then be employed to trace each causal thread individually over time, in the process painting a broader picture of the forces contributing to aid policy change over a longer period (I review the process tracing methodology in detail ahead, in subsection 3.4.2). In summary then, the aid policy decisionmaking framework functions as a lens that captures a very detailed snapshot of ‘what is going’ over a very short time span. This snapshot facilitates a broader examination of those determinants of aid policy that have been shown to matter in a given context over a longer period of time.

3.2.3 *Specifying the Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework*

In this concluding subsection of Section 3.2, I specify each of the terms used in the Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework. Namely, I define precisely what is meant by these four terms;

⁶⁸ The dilemma I am highlighting here is a familiar one in the literature. As Beach (2012, 33) has pointed out, “[c]reating more complex, multilevel models raises the dilemma of whether we should prioritize parsimonious theories that explain foreign policy with one or only a few explanatory variables, or whether we should aim for more complex models that give us greater explanatory leverage”.

individual decisionmaker, decision unit, aid policy decision and aid policy decisionmaking episode.

Individual Decisionmaker

A variety of individual decisionmakers will contribute to making an aid policy decision, each bringing with them their own perceptions to the proceedings. An **individual decisionmaker** is an actor who has some degree of involvement in an aid policy decisionmaking episode and either:

- a) has the authority (or has been delegated the authority) to act in the name of the state with reference to the decision at hand (R. C. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002, 59), or;
- b) has a role in supporting or assisting an actor who has the authority (or has been delegated the authority) to act in the name of the state.

An individual engaged in such a supporting or assisting role may do so formally (e.g. as a political staffer, appointed expert, or in line with their bureaucratic role), or informally (e.g. as a trusted personal adviser, academic or lobbyist).

Furthermore, I denote the individual decisionmaker who is the highest-ranking member of a government with formal responsibility for aid policy as the **principal** of an aid policy decisionmaking episode. In the case of many traditional donors, as in Australia, this individual is the Minister for Foreign Affairs (or equivalent). In the UK, during the period of my study, this individual is the Secretary of State for International Development (the ‘Development Secretary’). The precise title, and cabinet status, of the principal in the Netherlands changed during my research. The principles of the six decisionmaking episodes examined in this study are: Kevin Rudd, Julie Bishop, Douglas Alexander, Andrew Mitchell, Ben Knapen and Lilliane Ploumen. (Further details regarding these six principals, including their position titles, are included in Table 3.B in section 3.3).

The principal may not necessarily exercise the most influence over a given aid policy decision, as they may choose to delegate their authority to others. Alternatively, for example, a Prime Minister may decide to exercise his or her prerogative to intervene at a particular time or period of time, potentially even overruling the principal. While the principal is always an individual person, sometimes it makes sense to conceive of an aggregation of individuals as an ‘individual decisionmaker’ for the purpose of applying the framework⁶⁹. For example, the cumulative influence of an institution or organisation during a decisionmaking episode—a lobby group, or a particular government department, for instance—will often be most easily conceived of as a single unified actor for the purpose of analysis.

⁶⁹ This approach follows Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, Section 2.3, 17-24).

The Decision Unit

The **decision unit** is an individual or group of individuals “with the ability to commit the resources of the society and, when faced with a problem, the authority to make a decision that cannot be reversed” (M. G. Hermann 2001, 48). As alluded to above, the identity of this group of individuals, which Hermann calls the ‘authoritative decision unit’, will vary for each decision, depending on the nature of the problem, as well as how the aid policymaking subsystem is structured in a given state (M. G. Hermann 2001, 47–48). Furthermore, the composition of the authoritative decision unit for an aid policy decision will vary from decision to decision, both over time and according to the state in which the decisionmaking episode occurs.

I should clarify here that Hermann identifies three types of possible authoritative decision units as part of her theoretical framework explaining how decision units shape foreign policy (‘predominant leader’, ‘single group’ and ‘coalition of autonomous actors’). While I readily accept that these distinctions may be of relevance to aid policy decisionmaking (and return to this possibility in chapter 8), for the purposes of the development of the aid policy decisionmaking framework presented here, I simply borrow Hermann’s definition of the ‘authoritative decision unit’ without problematizing or classifying this entity any further.

Just as individuals operate within their own psychological environment (2000, 47), a decision unit will also generate its own psychological environment as it meets on various occasions, likely in various formations, during a distinct aid policy decisionmaking episode. This is why, as I highlighted earlier, the “subjective understandings of leaders are the single factor through which all others flow...” (Kaarbo 2015, 191). The decision unit operates in the same way, functioning as a kind of ‘aggregate funnel’. Beasley et al (2001, 218) have described how, “[i]n effect, the decision unit perceives and interprets the pressures and constraints posed by the domestic and international environments.”

Aid Policy Decision

Welch (2005, 23) defines a decision as “the output of a process of deliberation”. Following Welch, I define an **aid policy decision** as the output of a process of deliberation which is primarily concerned with how a state expends its ODA budget. Inherent in this definition is my definition of what ‘aid policy’ constitutes. In line with the discussion in chapter 1, which highlighted how defining aid is a “tricky business” (Lancaster 2007b, 12), I consider a state’s aid policy to be the distinct subset of its foreign policy that is concerned with questions about why and how to expend Official Development Assistance (ODA) contributions. I acknowledge that specifically defining aid as an element of a states’ foreign policy may be controversial. However, besides

being the clear position of the comparative aid policy literature, my denotation of aid policy as a subset of foreign policy should be viewed as a technical definition, rather than a normative one⁷⁰. Similarly, while not perfect, ODA remains the best readily available proxy for a (DAC-member) state's 'aid budget', and the long record of consistent data collection allows cross-country and temporal comparisons.

Aid Policy Decisionmaking Episode

While the decisionmaking framework above suggests an aid policy decision emerges from a singular, linear decisionmaking process, the reality is that an aid policy decision is often the product of a series of deliberations. As Hudson (2014, 4) argues, "[o]ne is almost always examining not a single decision, but a constellation of decisions taken with reference to a particular situation". Charles Hermann agrees that, in reality, any decisionmaking process is more circuitous than the framework implies. "For major problems," he contends (1990, 14), "decisionmaking frequently involves cycles and pauses rather than an orderly process in which each stage occurs only and always leads directly into one subsequent step until an outcome is reached."

In light of this nonlinear reality, I define an **aid policy decisionmaking episode** as encompassing a series of linked decisionmaking processes. The 'return arrow' in Figure 3.A is designed to depict that the decision unit will likely reassemble—in various forms at various times, for various reasons—prior to reaching an aid policy decision. At these junctures, important 'sub decisions' are made along the path to the final decision outcome. They may coincide with the production of a sub-output, such as draft document. Consequently, these sub decisions therefore represent useful points at which to obtain a snapshot of the prevailing dynamics during a decisionmaking episode.

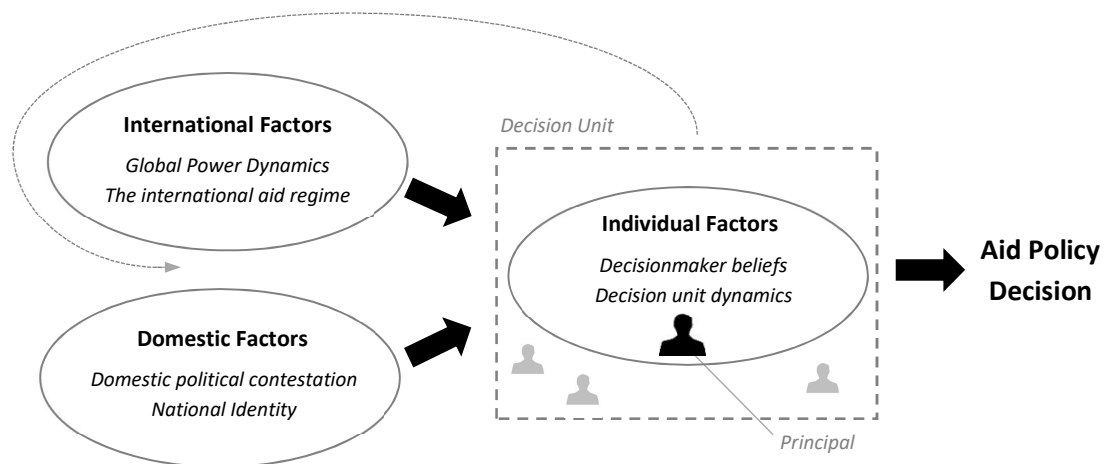
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⁷⁰ I consider a state's aid policy to be a subset of a state's foreign policy, providing 'foreign policy' is understood as that realm of public policy a state conducts outside its borders. If foreign policy is conceptualised this way, aid policy—because it is prosecuted outside a state's borders—must be accepted as component of a state's 'foreign policy'. This technical definition is somewhat problematic because equating aid as a component (or *tool* or *instrument*) of foreign policy has become normatively contested in practice. This controversy has not disappeared. Supporters of aid often object to aid being classified as a 'tool of foreign policy' because this suggests accepting the premise of the 'foreign policy approach' originally advocated by Morgenthau (1962): that aid should be deployed to secure national interests. To be clear, my equating aid as a tool of foreign policy is a technical stance, not a normative one. For an extended discussion on this matter—one which underscores why I consider aid policy to be a type of foreign policy—see Day (2016, 650).

3.3 The Framework as a Methodological Device

In addition to performing an important ‘locating’ function by promoting a particular way of viewing aid policy decisionmaking, the framework introduced and specified in the previous section also functions as a methodological tool, provided it is expanded slightly from the version presented earlier. The framework performs a methodological function by providing a consistent lens through which to view, reconstruct and then compare aid policy decisionmaking episodes. The expanded framework presented at Figure 3.B below incorporates six clusters of factors (two for each level of analysis) that the literature suggests are likely to shape aid policy decisionmaking. By cataloguing and organising factors the literature suggests are important determinants of aid policy, the framework shows *what* to ‘look for’ when reconstructing an aid policy decision making episode. By foregrounding these ‘variables of theoretical interest’, the framework contributes to generating a theoretically oriented narrative (George and Bennett 2005, 69, 205).

Figure 3.B: Expanded Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework



In its expanded form, the framework is akin to a checklist. It ensures that factors likely to shape aid policy decisionmaking are actively considered in the process of reconstructing how an aid policy decision was arrived at. Embedding these pre-identified factors into the framework prepares the ground for more effective process tracing (a subject addressed in more detail in subsection 3.4.2). As Lundsgaarde (2013, 15) has pointed out, in order for such an analysis “to be more than a descriptive study, it should be informed by propositions *that identify the phenomena that a researcher expects to see* when theories are exposed to historical

evidence” (emphasis added)⁷¹. Lundsgaarde’s advice accords with that of Blatter and Haverland (2012, 106) who recommend that, ahead of process tracing, “[a] review of existing studies from various disciplines provides the researcher with a broad spectrum of potentially important factors of influence.” The factors a researcher should ‘expect to see’ when recreating aid policy decisionmaking are summarised in Table 3.A below.

Table 3.A: Six ‘Clusters’ of Factors Capable of Shaping Aid Policy Decisionmaking

Level of Analysis	Cluster of Factors Shaping Aid Policy	Assumption
Individual Factors	Decisionmaker beliefs	The beliefs individual decisionmakers maintain about aid, including its purpose and utility, influence aid policy decision making.
	Decision unit dynamics	The composition of, and ‘psychological environment’ within, the decision unit responsible for making an aid policy influence aid policy decision making.
Domestic Factors	Domestic political contestation	The contestation amongst the domestic actors that seek to influence the political process has the potential to shape aid policy decisionmaking.
	National identity	The way a state conceives of itself influences aid policy decisionmaking.
International Factors	The International Aid Regime	The norms prevailing in the international aid regime influence aid policy decisionmaking.
	Global power dynamics	Global power shifts influence aid policy decisionmaking.

The task of this section of the chapter is to overview each of the six potential drivers of change summarised in Table 3.A. Before doing so, however, two aspects of how the framework functions as a methodological device warrant clarification. First, as per most such categorisation exercises, creating neat intellectual boxes within which to confine complex reality is a limited, and ultimately somewhat artificial, process. Delineating between levels of analysis is much neater in theory than in practice. For example, while I classify ‘decision unit dynamics’ as an individual level factor, there are valid reasons why it might have been classified as a domestic level factor. (The key reason for my decision to classify decision unit dynamics as an ‘individual factor’ is because much of the research on the role of small groups in foreign policy concern how psychological factors influence group dynamics). In summary, I concede that there is inevitably

⁷¹ Lundsgaarde’s advice accords with that of Blatter and Haverland (2012, 106) who recommend that, ahead of process tracing, “[a] review of existing studies from various disciplines provides the researcher with a broad spectrum of potentially important factors of influence.”

considerable ‘bleeding’ between these categories and completing isolating and untangling one factor from another can only ever be proximate⁷².

Second, the framework’s foregrounding of six factors does not imply that other factors are not able to shape a given decision making episode. As I discuss in more detail later in the chapter (see subsection 3.4.2), the way I applied the framework consciously allowed for other important shaping factors to be inductively identified during the analysis, as is considered good practice when conducting process tracing (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 30). Yet while there are almost an innumerable number of factors which *might* exert some influence on aid policy decisionmaking, the literature does suggest certain factors are especially likely to be most relevant in shaping aid policy decisionmaking. I turn now to summarising each of these factors.

3.3.1 Individual Factors

Beliefs about Aid

Alexander George (1980, 57) has explained how, “every individual acquires during the course of his development a set of beliefs and personal constructs about the physical and social environment”. These beliefs and constructs become heuristics that facilitate a more ordered, (albeit partial) understanding of an otherwise confusing external world. An individual decisionmaker inevitably employs these heuristics in forming preferences and determining a course of action. Because ideas help “order the world”, they function as road maps guiding an individual’s choices in uncertain environments (Goldstein and Keohane 1993, 13)⁷³. It follows that one would expect that *the beliefs individual decisionmakers maintain about aid, including its purpose and utility, shape aid policy decision making*.

However, while there is a considerable literature documenting how the beliefs of political leaders influence foreign policy decisions, especially decisions which are national security related (for example Yetiv 2013), there has virtually no systematic work produced that interrogates how an individual leader’s views on aid impact a state’s aid policy choices. The renewed post-Cold War interest in the study of belief systems as causal mechanisms in foreign policy analysis (Schafer and Walker 2006, 3) has not been extended to aid policy⁷⁴.

⁷² As Carlsnaes (2012, 114) counsels, it is precisely the “omnipresence of both actors and structures, and the intimate and reciprocal link between... factors” that “complicates matters of the foreign policy analyst...”

⁷³ Goldstein and Keohane (1993, 13) find that “the ideas individuals hold... become important elements in the explanation of policy choice.” For a discussion on the way ideas can function as road maps for political decisionmakers, see Goldstein and Keohane (1993, 13–17).

⁷⁴ The Operational Code Analysis literature, which attempts to codify the belief systems of leaders, represents a long running research effort to understand how, why, and when the psychology of leaders impact foreign policy decisions. For an overview of this literature, see (Schafer and Walker 2006, chapter 1). Stephen Dyson’s book *The*

While it is widely accepted within the development community that individuals such as Clare Short (Morrissey 2002), Gordon Brown and Tony Blair in the UK (Payne 2006) and Jan Pronk in the Netherlands (van Gastel and Nuijten 2005) were able to exert considerable influence over the shape of aid policy, the precise way that their personal beliefs, or personal perceptions of constraints shaped aid policy at particular moments have not been widely documented, with details remaining largely anecdotal. Given Kevin Rudd's personal enthusiasm for expanding the aid budget (Rudd 2010a), and David Cameron's determination to make support for aid a key part of the Conservative Party's modernisation program (Heppell and Lightfoot 2012), there is reason to expect the personal beliefs of these leaders influenced the aid policy decisionmaking episodes this research considers. On the other hand, Breuning (2013) has demonstrated, using the example of former Belgian State Secretary for Development Cooperation, Reginald Moreels, that it is very possible that, despite their best efforts, leaders who are passionate about reforming aid policy can be prevented from doing so by circumstances outside their control. Their scope of action can be limited by the 'bureaucratic web' they operate within and their domestic audience (Breuning 2013, 311) amongst other factors.

Decision Unit dynamics

The foreign policy analysis subdiscipline features a well-developed literature exploring the implications of the fact that foreign policy decisions are regularly made by small groups⁷⁵. The seminal contribution to the small group dynamics literature was Irving Janis' (1972) study *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign-policy Decisions and Fiascos*. Janis demonstrated how a tendency towards Groupthink—when small group members' "strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative course of action" (Janis 1972, 9)—contributed to a range of foreign policy fiascos, among them President's Kennedy's calamitous Bay of Pigs invasion. While the small group dynamics literature focuses on crisis decisionmaking, 't Hart, Stern and Sundelius (1997, 9) argue that small group analysis is also pertinent for routine and low and medium politics issues, potentially including aid.

Of special relevance to this project, given the Cameron-Clegg Government was the first British coalition government since the Second World War and the fact that Dutch coalition cabinets are routine, are the small group dynamics associated with coalition cabinet in foreign policy

Blair Identity: Leadership and Foreign Policy is an excellent recent example in this genre (Dyson 2009). The work of Margaret Hermann, to highlight a key contributor to this literature, has demonstrated how leaders matter in foreign policy decisions (see, for example, M. G. Hermann 1980; M. G. Hermann and Hagan 1998; M. G. Hermann et al. 2001).

⁷⁵ For a brief overview of this literature, see Hudson (2014, 19–20).

decisionmaking, a research field where the work of Juliet Kaarbo is prominent⁷⁶. Coalition politics have been shown to influence aid and development policy (Kaarbo 2013, Loc 236). For example, there are numerous examples of the development portfolio being used to ‘round out’ the politics of coalition arrangements in both Belgium (Breuning 2013, 316) and the Netherlands (Kaarbo 2013, Loc 1595).

Decision units generate their own ‘psychological environment’ (Rosati 2000, 50), through which policy options are filtered. The manner in which individual decisionmakers come together to make decisions during a decisionmaking episode influences the decision outcome (M. G. Hermann 2001; Beasley et al. 2001). Accordingly, the aid policy decisionmaking framework accounts for the possibility that *the composition of, and ‘psychological environment’ within, the decision unit responsible for making an aid policy influence aid policy decision making*⁷⁷.

3.3.2 Domestic Factors

Domestic Political Contestation

One of the more productive lines of enquiry within the determinants of aid literature in recent times is scholarship that seeks to isolate and understand the aid policy impact of a single domestic actor or institution, such as the media or legislatures⁷⁸. A common desire links these ventures: to better understand how, and to what extent, a certain actor or group can access and influence the aid decisionmaking process⁷⁹. Accordingly, the framework assumes that *contestation amongst the domestic actors that seek to access to influence the political process has the potential to shape aid policy decisionmaking*. When considering domestic political contestation, the influence of the development constituency and the aid policy system are likely to be especially important.

⁷⁶ Relevant publications include Kaarbo (1996, 2008, 2013), Kaarbo and Beasley (2008; 2014), Kaarbo and Lantis (2003) and Cantir and Kaarbo (2012).

⁷⁷ Kennedy (2012, 23), for example, advises that “one would naturally need to assess the views of a wider group of individuals, while also considering the nuances of the particular decision-making process involved, in order to make useful predictions about foreign policy.”

⁷⁸ Some of the key threads in the substantial domestic determinants of aid literature include those that, for example, examine the impact of: the media’s role in influencing aid effort (Van Belle and Hook 2000; Van Belle 2003; Van Belle, Rioux, and Potter 2004; Lim, Barnett, and Kim 2008); the role of legislatures in aid allocation (Milner and Tingley 2010) the influence of partisan policy and ideology on aid (Thérien and Noël 2000; Thérien 2002a; Fleck and Kilby 2006; Tingley 2010; Brech and Potrafke 2014); the role of interest groups— particularly NGOs (Kim 2014) and business (Lundsgaarde 2013, 194); and the role of public opinion on aid (D. Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson 2012a; Milner and Tingley 2013)⁷⁸. Yet despite considerable advancements in understanding the role of these factors and others— particularly since the turn of the millennium—it remains the case that the “domestic politics of foreign aid decision-making... remain poorly understood” (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 13).

⁷⁹ For a theoretical discussion on access to the policy process in the context of aid policy, see Lundsgaarde (2013, 32–34).

Research is increasingly highlighting how the composition, character, and relative influence of the *development constituency* in each state flavours its aid policy⁸⁰. Horký and Lightfoot (2012, 17) define a ‘development constituency’ as “the network of actors active in shaping and/or implementing development cooperation programs” in a given country. In adopting this definition for use in this thesis, I also include development NGOs, such as CARE, Oxfam, and World Vision, to comprise part of the development constituency.

The *aid policy system* refers to the institutional setting within which aid policy decisionmaking occurs⁸¹. These institutional arrangements for aid management and oversight will vary in each donor state, with implications for which actors are able to gain access to the aid policy decisionmaking process and how they are able to do so⁸². These institutional arrangements will also determine how key decision units responsible for aid policy are constituted. Bureaucratic politics can also be expected to influence the course and outcome of an aid policy decisionmaking episode. Various institutional arrangements to consider when reconstructing the dynamics of an aid policymaking decision include: the place where “the main government actor with a development mandate” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 191) sits; the extent to which the legislature is engaged in, and informed about, development issues (Lancaster 2007b, 219–20); how fragmented and decentralised the aid policy system (Lundsgaarde 2013, chapter 2); and “the relative power and interests of the bureaucracies involved” in aid policy (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 30)⁸³.

National Identity

According to van der Veen (2011, 28), “national identity can be conceptualized as a basic worldview, combined with ideas about the type of national image a nation aspires to, as well as a sense of the values represented by the nation.” The determinants of aid literature shows that societal values are reflected in the aid giving behaviour of states, hence the framework assumes

⁸⁰ In her study examining the domestic politics of aid in the United States, France, Denmark and Lancaster has demonstrated the “importance of a constituency for development aid” in “carrying sizeable aid budgets forward” for considerable periods (Lancaster 2007a, 220). Horký and Lightfoot (2012, 8) reported similar findings in their study on focusing on new Central and Eastern European donors, “quantity of aid is directly related to the ability of the domestic development community to mobilize resources.” The unique character of a given development constituency also matters. For example, Lundsgaarde (2013, 13), has documented how the “formal integration of the business community in the aid policy process” is a “striking feature of aid policymaking in Denmark”, ensuing that, while Denmark maintains high levels of aid expenditure, its aid policy is distinctly influenced by commercial objectives (Lancaster 2007, chapter 7). (The material in this footnote was also included in a similar discussion in Day (2016)).

⁸¹ While the exact language varies, all comparative aid policy scholars deploy a term that refers to the broad institutional arrangements within which aid policy decisionmaking occurs. For example, Lancaster (2007a, 22) uses ‘aid organization’ rather than ‘aid policy system’.

⁸² A key finding of Lundsgaarde’s (2013, 196–97) is that institutions “determine the way that societal interests are incorporated into the policymaking process” at the same time as structuring “the nature of competition between governmental actors by determining how policymaking authority is distributed among them”.

⁸³ Key non-aid studies of bureaucratic politics include Allison (1969), Allison and Halperin (1972) and Halperin, Clapp and Kanter (2006).

that *the way a state conceives of itself influences aid policy decisionmaking*. Stated another way, the way a given society answers the question ‘who are we?’ has implications for aid policy: a state’s internal priorities and attitudes can be expected to be reflected in their external priorities and attitudes. As Lumsdaine (1993, 22) explains, “[c]itizens and leaders who favour certain principles in domestic politics are more apt to approve their worth and see their usefulness in international affairs...”

One of two key ways the literature has sought to examine how national identity impacts aid policy relates to the way in which “welfare principles institutionalized at the domestic level shape the participation of developed countries in the international aid regime” (Noël and Thérien 1995, 523). The model developed by Thérien and Noël (2000, 160) confirmed the “the primacy of welfare state socialist attributes and government social spending in the explanation of development assistance policies”. Those societies that prioritise income redistribution at the national level—including, notably for aid, the Scandinavian countries—are more accepting of it at the international level and this is reflected in their propensity to give proportionally more aid. Aid giving behaviour can therefore be viewed as an extension of socio-political and cultural values of a society (Stokke 1989b, 278; Ball 2010).

A second important way national identity has been shown to impact aid policy is via the notion of national role conceptions⁸⁴. Marijke Breuning, the scholar most closely associated with this line of enquiry, has shown how “[d]ecision makers’ perceptions of their state’s role in the international environment form an important cue to the motivations and objectives that determine the policies they pursue” (Breuning 1995, 236). In her key 1995 study, which was based on her doctoral research (Breuning 1992), Breuning demonstrated that the aid policy behaviour of the Netherlands, Belgium and the United Kingdom largely fitted their respective ‘activist’, ‘merchant’ and ‘power broker’ role conceptions (Breuning 1995, 250)⁸⁵. The fact that states that are middle powers have tended to be amongst the leading donors reinforces the idea that the roles decisionmakers see their states as playing on the international stage guides decisionmakers when making aid policy (Breuning 1992, 241; Stokke 1989a). Breuning (1995, 237), does caution, however, that role conceptions may vary with respect to different issue

⁸⁴ For general (i.e. non-aid specific) overviews of how national role conceptions impact foreign policy see Holsti (1970) and Wish (1980).

⁸⁵ Breuning’s doctoral thesis was titled *National role conceptions and foreign assistance policy behavior: toward a cognitive model* (Breuning 1992). In a series of subsequent publications, Breuning (1995, 1998) continued to examine the relationship between national role conceptions and aid policy. In more recent times, Breuning’s research has expanded to examining the theoretical potential for role theory more generally (Thies and Breuning 2012).

areas, suggesting that states will often exhibit a unique ‘aid identity’, with certain characteristics or preferences repeatedly emphasised over time.

3.3.3 International Factors

The International Aid Regime

Krasner (1982, 186) has defined a regime as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations”. Following Hook’s lead, I embrace Krasner’s definition to conceptualise the international aid regime, understanding it to embody the “broadly accepted standards of international behaviour” (Florini 1996, 363) concerning aid giving⁸⁶. While scholarship on aid has shown that international norms can influence aid policy decisionmaking (Lumsdaine 1993), the international aid regime has undeniably evolved and changed over time, with different normative agendas dominating at different times (Thérien 2002b, 462; Hook 2008a, 87)⁸⁷. Considering these twin realities, the aid policy decisionmaking framework assumes that *the norms prevailing in the international aid regime influence aid policy decisionmaking*.

Several scholars have utilised international relations literature on norms to explain evolutions in the international aid regime. Lumsdaine (1993, 24) examined the foreign aid regime from 1949 to 1989 and found that the “[p]ractices and norms of international life... influence states’ international conduct”. More recently, Fukuda-Parr and Hulme employ Finnemore and Sikkink’s (1998) analytical framework to demonstrate how the Millennium Development Goals became “so widely accepted as an international normative framework of development” (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme 2009, 2)⁸⁸. Since the end of the Cold War, the development purposes of aid have been emphasised (Lancaster 2007a, chapter 2), with poverty reduction becoming “over-arching objective of the international policy agenda” concern since the late 1990s (Fukuda-Parr 2011, 122). This emphasis was accompanied with a renewed embrace of the international goal of devoting 0.7% of national income to development assistance (Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi 2015, 3; Clemens and Moss 2005), with the ‘0.7% target’ becoming “a cause celebre

⁸⁶ A consistent focus of Steven Hook’s work has been to examine how the international aid regime functions to impart systemic pressure on a state’s aid policy choices (Hook 1993; Hook 1995; Schraeder, Hook, and Taylor 1998; Hook and Rumsey 2016). Hook’s understanding of the ‘international aid regime’ is informed by Krasner’s definition.

⁸⁷ Hook and Rumsey (2016, 61) argue that the international aid regime can be viewed as a procedural regime due to the fact that the ‘central standards’ of the international aid regime relate to internal outputs of donors, rather than effectiveness in reducing poverty levels. They identify four ‘central standards’ of the ODA regime: “the volume of ODA as a percentage of donor gross national income (GNI), the proportion of aid provided to governments in extreme poverty, the proportion of aid provided as grants rather than concessional (low interest) loans, and the proportion of aid that is tied to the provision of donor goods and services” (Hook and Rumsey 2016, 60–61). As the body responsible for monitoring and reporting on these standards, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), is often used as a metonym for the aid regime.

⁸⁸ For an overview of the history of the MDGs, see Fukuda-Parr (2004) and Hulme (2009).

for aid activists and... politicians” (Clemens and Moss 2005, 3)⁸⁹. With respect to my cases, the ongoing aspirational hold of the 0.7% norm was demonstrated in the way in which Australian and Dutch politicians finessed their announcements to cut aid spending so they appear not to be directly contravening or abandoning their international obligations⁹⁰.

In recent times the international development regime has again come under pressure, as a new ‘development landscape’ emerges (Gore 2013; Kilby 2012; Greenhill, Prizzon, and Rogerson 2013). Ideas about aid, how it should be provided, and who should provide it and where, are changing rapidly, with implications for the politics of aid (Woods 2005)⁹¹. Given “[t]here is general consensus in scholarly and policy circles that the global aid regime is undergoing major changes” (Chin and Quadir 2012)⁹² it is reasonable to expect decisionmakers to ‘factor them in’ when making aid policy decisions⁹³.

Global Power Dynamics

Substantial changes in the international aid regime and in the trajectory of the aid policy of donors map closely with major historical geopolitical shifts. The modern aid regime was established in the aftermath of the Second World War. Cold War rivalries shaped aid giving for most of the second half of the twentieth century. Aid spending levels contracted sharply following the fall of the Berlin Wall, with many questioning whether aid had an ongoing role (Riddell 2007, 2). Unipolarity brought with it the opportunity to redefine aid’s purposes around promoting development. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, the US-led War on Terror led

⁸⁹ The defining norm of the international aid regime has been the enshrinement of the 0.7% of ODA to GNI spending target as an indicator of donor commitment (Hook and Rumsey 2016, 61). This rather arbitrary target has proven remarkably durable considering ongoing constant controversy about its relevance and the considerable gap between those states advocating for (and assenting to) the target and those actually achieving it. Only a handful of states have reached this spending target since it was articulated in the 1960s. This gap between rhetoric and reality is just one example of the common observation that “donor practice is decoupled from the norms of effectiveness they claim to support” (S. Brown and Swiss 2013, 752).

⁹⁰ In Australia, for example, when the Coalition announced large cuts to aid spending ahead of the 2013 election, senior politicians insisted the Coalition remained “committed” to a 0.5% spending target, despite not committing to a timeframe (Hockey and Robb 2013b; Liberal Party of Australia and The Nationals 2013). In the Netherlands, the Second Rutte Cabinet, after abandoning the 0.7% spending target, began pushing to reform the way ODA was counted (Ploumen 2014).

⁹¹ The drivers of these changes are myriad and multilayered. They include, but are not limited to: geopolitical power shifts; the dramatic increase in the number of actors involved in global development; the rapid rise of emerging donors, especially China, bringing with them competing notions of how to ‘do’ development (Woods 2008; Bräutigam 2011); the associated break-down in the traditional donor-recipient relationship; the fact that ODA spending comprises an ever-shrinking component of international resources transfers (Development Initiatives 2013); the increasing emphasis being given to the beyond-aid agenda; and the shift in location of the world’s poor (Sumner 2012).

⁹² According to Mawdsley, Savage, and Kim (2014) a ‘paradigm shift’ is underway in the international development regime. Zimmerman and Smith (2011, 733), meanwhile, contend that the “established international development co-operation system is in the midst of a legitimacy crisis.”

⁹³ The key aid policy documents published by recent governments in Australia, the Netherlands and the UK each make specific mention of these changes. Nonetheless, there remains a question as to whether changes in the international aid regime was a key factor influence aid policy decisionmakers, or whether they function more as a means of justifying or explaining a particularly course or action.

to the re-emergence of aid as an important geopolitical tool (Fleck and Kilby 2010, 185). As Roger Riddell (2007, 2) has observed, “aid has managed, repeatedly, to reinvent and renew itself after repeated bouts of uncertainty, doubt and pessimism.” The historical record of the international aid regime, instructs us to expect, as the framework acknowledges, that *global power shifts influence aid policy decisionmaking*.

According to Andrew Cooper (Cooper 2013, 963), we are currently experiencing a “moment of transition” in the international system. It follows that states are again redefining the rationale for the aid programs. According to Ablett and Erdmann (2013, 4) “the ten years from 2000 to 2010 saw the fastest-ever shift in the world’s economic center of gravity.” The rapid economic growth of emerging economies is transforming global politics, with power shifting away from the rich, mostly Western states that have traditionally been aid donors. As emerging powers demand roles in global affairs commensurate with their rising economic power, the extant Western-dominated global order is being strained, including the international aid regime (Bisley 2010; Cooper 2013, 964; Golub 2013, 1002; Wesley 2011, 42). In response to these changes, states are reassessing how to best engage with their external environment and re-examining how aid fits into their foreign policy mix. This reassessment process is particularly challenging for states like Australia, the Netherlands and the UK, who have acknowledged their declining relative global influence and admitted that they are configuring their aid programs in light of this reality⁹⁴. These are all reasons to suspect that *global power shifts influence aid policy decisionmaking*.

§§§

3.4 Operationalising the Framework: From application to analytical explanation

The chief objective of this concluding section of the chapter is to explain, in practical terms, how I applied the aid policy decisionmaking framework to produce the empirical chapters presented

⁹⁴ For example, this frank admission features at the outset of *A World to Gain*: “[t]he influence of the Netherlands as a country is decreasing due to the emergence of new actors on the world stage” (MFA 2013, 5). *Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability* commences with this observation: “[t]he world has changed—and our aid program must change too” (DFAT 2014, 2). These sentiments are not confined to aid policy documents. Australia’s 2013 National Security Strategy recognises that “as the global order shifts, our capacity to shape institutions and forge consensus is more important than ever” (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2013, ii). Likewise, Britain’s 2010 National Security Strategy (Cabinet Office 2010, 4) recognised that, “in order to protect our interests at home, we must project our influence abroad. As the global balance of power shifts, it will become harder for us to do so.”

in Part II. In the first subsection, I discuss my research design and case selection, outlining the decisionmaking episodes I chose to reconstruct and why. Next, I describe the three-step process by which I reconstructed these chosen episodes and transformed this raw empirical material into the analytical explanations found in chapters 5, 6 and 7. To conclude, I explain the role elite interviews played as a data source.

3.4.1 Research Design and Case Selection

I expressed in chapter 1 how this research project emerged in response to a trio of confounding aid policy *announcements* made over the course of six months in 2013. Each of these announcements conveyed a definitive policy choice: Australia would abandon its spending ramp-up to 0.5%; the Netherlands would abandon its 40-year long policy of spending at least 0.7%; and the UK, having just reached the 0.7% target for the first time, promised to continue to spend this amount for the foreseeable future. I was driven to understand how these choices were determined. In methodological terms, my case selection was Y-centred: this research proceeded using a ‘causes of effects’ approach, not an ‘effects of causes’ approach (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 41)⁹⁵.

Case selection based on the dependent variable is often considered taboo when conducting social science (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 100), partly due to the influence of King, Keohane and Verba’s (1994) volume *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*. As Goertz and Mahoney (2012, 41) acknowledge, “quantitative scholars have clearly come down as a group in favour of the effects-of-causes approach as the standard way to do social science.” Yet recent scholarship has shown how “methodologists rooted in the tradition of large-N studies... provide misleading advice” (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 100) by mistakenly extending the logic of inference used in quantitative research to qualitative research (Goertz and Mahoney 2012)⁹⁶.

The reality is that foreign policy analysis is a predominantly Y-centred approach. It generally seeks to explain why a given foreign policy decision was made. This research project was initially triggered by observing surprising events occurring in the real world. I was motivated to explain

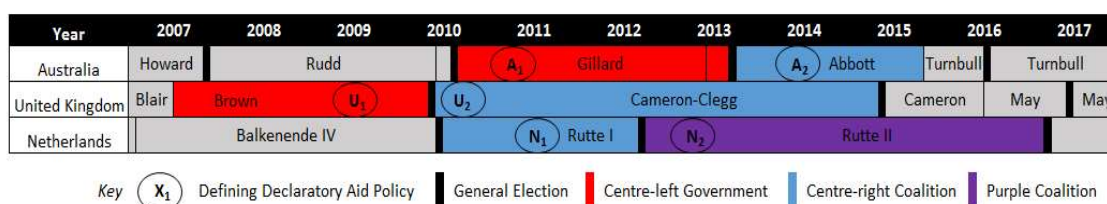
⁹⁵ Scholars working within the ‘quantitative culture’ operate using an ‘effects of causes’ approach. Such scholars prize the controlled experiment and seek to “estimate the average effect of an independent variable of interest” (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 41). In contrast, as Blatter and Haverland (2012, 99) point out, “[s]mall-N research with an emphasis on causal-process tracing does not rely on the co-variation of variables across cases to draw causal inferences”.

⁹⁶ For overviews of the ‘state of play’ of causal inference in qualitative research, see Collier, Brady, and Seawright (2010) and Mahoney (2010).

these surprising events by asking about their causes (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 42). Alongside being “interested in explaining outcomes in individual cases”, I was also driven to study “the effects of particular causal factors within individual cases” (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 42). My approach was to begin with a series of outputs (significant and confounding aid policy decisions relating to aid spending) and work backwards to explain how these outputs were realised. In doing so, I proceeded in the manner described by Stuart (2008, 576), who explains how “foreign-policy decision-making *takes as its starting point the dependent variable*—a specific foreign-policy choice by an international actor—and seeks to explain how this choice was arrived at by the agents... involved in the decisional process” (emphasis added).

As I conducted preliminary research into the three aid policy announcements that prompted the project, it became increasingly evident that to simply recreate the decisionmaking processes which led to these policy announcements would not provide a definitive answer to the research question. In response, I sought to identify a series of comparable aid policy decision *outputs* (as opposed to *announcements*) which were the product of distinct decisionmaking episodes. My solution was to reconstruct the three decisionmaking processes which led to the definitive strategic level aid policy statement published by the Governments in power when the research-initiating announcements were made—the Abbott, Cameron-Clegg and Rutte I Governments, respectively (refer Neack 2014, 9).

Figure 3.C: Research Design Summary



What soon became clear was that my research design would benefit greatly if, in addition to being able to make cross-country comparisons, I could also examine changes *within* countries over time. To generate temporal comparisons, I decided to also examine an additional three decisionmaking episodes—those which produced the definitive aid policy statements of the government’s preceding those already identified. My final research design therefore called for the reconstruction of six aid policy decisionmaking episodes that resulted in what I consider to be *the* definitive aid policy declarations of consecutive Governments in three countries. A benefit of adopting this research design for these countries was the way it allowed for the effects

of changing government ideology on aid policy to be examined. As Figure 3.C highlights, in each of my case study countries, the most recent general election (at the time of settling on my research design) had seen government change hands, bringing to power governments of different ideological orientation⁹⁷.

Table 3.B below is an expanded version of Table 1.A presented in chapter 1. A crucial reason I selected these six decisionmaking episodes to reconstruct was that the decision outputs that were produced were comparable. These episodes resulted in what might be called ‘White Paper equivalent’ outputs⁹⁸. This was highly beneficial for three important reasons⁹⁹. First, such episodes conform to a predictable pattern. While many foreign policy decisionmaking episodes are difficult to delineate, White Paper-type processes have definitive start and end points. Moreover, a formal government announcement and/or press conference usually takes place at the initiation of the process and at its completion, where the final policy document is typically launched. Media coverage attends these set piece moments, which usually involve speeches from the responsible cabinet minister.

Second, the relative *accessibility* of White Paper-type decisionmaking processes is crucial in permitting effective causal process tracing (something discussed in more detail in the following subsection). As Blatter and Haverland (2012, 25) argue, “[b]ecause causal-process tracing depends on gaining a comprehensive overview over the temporal unfolding of the causal-process, the ability to provide a dense description of critical moments, and the possibility of gaining deep insights into the perceptions and motivations of important actors, the accessibility of a case is the primary precondition for investigation”. White Paper-type decisionmaking episodes are not conducted as “behind closed doors” to the extent that most foreign policy decisions are (Beach 2012, 3) and because of their semi-public nature, it is relatively easy to identify the participants¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁷ Having a means to compare governments with different ideological stances was particularly important given the reason Cameron’s decision to maintain his Government’s commitment 0.7 % was so surprisingly is precisely because it confronted expectations about how Conservative governments are likely to behave in times of fiscal pressure. Likewise, it was surprising that the Netherlands finally made the decision to abandon the 0.7% target during a Coalition in which the PvdA (Labour) was involved, rather than during the previous centre-right coalition (which relied on the far-right Party for Freedom (PVV) of Geert Wilders to form government).

⁹⁸ The UK Government did not produce a White Paper type policy related to aid during the course of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government (2010-2015). However, while the Spending Round 2010 encompasses policy issues ranging far beyond just aid, the *process* by which this document was produced is comparable with a White Paper process.

⁹⁹ As discussed in chapter 1, the fact that the decisionmaking episodes from Australia, the Netherlands and the UK during this period produced similar outputs contributed to my selection of these countries to study, rather than, for example, Canada or Norway.

¹⁰⁰ For example, *Building Our Common Future* includes a list of the key individuals involved (DFID 2009c, 154).

Table 3.B: Case Selection Summary

		Series One	Series Two
Australia	Defining Declaratory Policy	<i>An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results</i>	<i>Australian aid: Promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability</i>
	Episode Designation	AUS I	AUS II
	Short name	Effective Aid	Australian aid
	Publication Date	6 July 2011	18 June 2014
	Government	Gillard Labor Government (minority Government)	Abbott Government (Liberal / National Coalition)
	Political Orientation	Centre-left	Centre-right
	Head of Government	Julia Gillard	Tony Abbott
	Principal (Position)	Kevin Rudd (Minister for Foreign Affairs)	Julie Bishop (Minister for Foreign Affairs)
The United Kingdom	Trigger for Episode (date)	Rudd's announcement of Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness (16 November 2010)	Abbott Government's announcement to cut aid spending and integrate AusAID with DFAT (5 / 18 September 2013)
	Defining Declaratory Policy	<i>Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future</i>	<i>Spending Review 2010</i>
	Episode Designation	UK I	UK II
	Short name	Building our Common Future	Spending Review 2010
	Publication Date	6 July 2009	20 October 2010
	Government	Brown Labour Government	Cameron-Clegg Coalition Government (Conservative / Liberal Democrat Coalition)
	Political Orientation	Centre-left	Centre-right
	Head of Government	Gordon Brown	David Cameron
The Netherlands	Principal (Position)	Douglas Alexander (Secretary of State for International Development)	Andrew Mitchell (Secretary of State for International Development)
	Trigger for Episode (date)	Speech by Douglas Alexander (19 January 2009)	Conservative / Liberal Democrat Coalition Agreement commitment to conduct a spending review (12 May 2010)
	Defining Declaratory Policy	<i>Letter to the House of Representatives presenting the spearheads of development cooperation policy</i>	<i>A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment</i>
	Episode Designation	NED I	NED II
	Short name	Spearheads letter	A World to Gain
	Publication Date	18 March 2011	5 April 2013
	Government	Rutte I (VVD / CDA Coalition + PVV support)	Rutte II (VVD / PvdA Coalition)
	Political Orientation	Centre-right	Centrist (Purple Coalition)
	Head of Government	Mark Rutte	Mark Rutte
	Principal (Position)	Ben Knapen (State Secretary for European Affairs and Development Cooperation)	Lilliane Ploumen (Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation)
	Trigger for Episode (date)	VVD & CDA Coalition Agreement commitment to "fundamentally review and [modernise]" Dutch development policy (30 September 2010)	VVD & PvdA Coalition Agreement commitment to reduce aid spending below 0.7% (29 October 2012)

Third, White Paper-type decisionmaking episodes are highly deliberative and the decision output therefore can be taken to represent a considered view. Unlike many foreign policy decisionmaking episodes, a White Paper-equivalent producing episode ultimately results in a tangible decision output of considerable length¹⁰¹. The decisionmaking process generally incorporates input from a relatively wide range of stakeholders. Although final approval ultimately rests with the principal, the collaborative nature of these types of decisionmaking episodes is more likely to reveal where tensions and differences of opinions exist between different individuals and groups.

3.4.2 Causal Process Tracing: Towards an explanation

The chief empirical task of this research project was to reconstruct six aid policy decisionmaking episodes, a process guided by the framework introduced above. It must be emphasised, however, that these reconstructions, however detailed and illuminating they might be, are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are the means by which I sought answers to the question that animates this thesis: why do major shifts in aid policy occur?

The six decisionmaking episodes I reconstructed do not result in definitive decisions regarding aid spending targets (UK II is the notable exception). Aid policy decisionmaking rarely works in that way. Foreign policy decisionmaking episodes akin to the Cuban Missile Crisis, where deliberations must reach concrete decisions on a course of foreign policy action, are rare in the aid policy issue area. In the absence of such episodes, the next best approach is to examine comparable White Paper-type outputs.

Reconstructing White-Paper-type decisionmaking episodes provides a 'way in' to discovering the prevailing decisionmaking dynamics. In essence, each White Paper functions like Alice's looking glass from Lewis Carroll's classic novel *Through the Looking-Glass*. The White Paper provides access to another world; the unique world of aid policymaking. Once 'through the looking glass', I am introduced to characters and ideas and events that allow me to gain greater insight into the story of how and why aid policy changed in each environment. The web of forces which are exerted on aid policy decisionmakers become suddenly more discernible

Reconstructing how a decisionmaking proceeded reveals potential causal threads which can then be followed back and forward through time using causal process tracing methods. Causal

¹⁰¹ By far the shortest of the decision outputs I examine is *Spearheads of Development Cooperation*, which consists of 21 pages. *Building Our Common Future*, at the other end of the spectrum, runs for over 150 pages.

process tracing is particularly suited to foreign policy analysis because “the research is interested in the many and complex causes of a specific outcome (Y) and not so much in the effects of a specific cause (X)” (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 80). Bennett and Checkel (2015a, Loc 282) recently defined process tracing as: “the analysis of evidence on processes, sequences, and conjunctures of events within a case for the purposes of either developing or testing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that might causally explain the case”. In reconstructing the sequence of events leading to particular aid policy decisions, my overriding objective was to *explain* how and why the trajectory of aid policy changed in the countries under consideration. Lundsgaarde (2013, 15), who was pursuing very similar research objectives, explains that the “core of the process-tracing method is an effort to reconstruct the course of events and the constellation of variables that led to a given outcome.”

The literature on process tracing matured rapidly during my doctoral studies, helping considerably in my desire to conduct ‘good process tracing’¹⁰². Admittedly, conceptions of good process tracing remain an open question, with the term suffering from its status as a buzzword (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Chapter One). Nonetheless, as captured by the subtitle of their important new book, Bennett and Checkel are confident in asserting that process tracing has evolved from a “metaphor to an analytical tool”. In my use of process tracing as an analytical tool, I adhered closely to the set of best practice guidelines for process tracing recently outlined by Bennett and Checkel (2015a, Loc 589)¹⁰³. I also sought out scholarship identified in the process tracing literature as examples of good process tracing to guide my approach¹⁰⁴. Ultimately, the empirical material presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7 was produced in three phases, summarised in Table 3.C below¹⁰⁵. The remainder of this subsection of the chapter is devoted to describing each of these phases in more detail.

Phase 1: Building a foundation of prior knowledge

Prior to undertaking fieldwork and conducting interviews, I invested considerable time building up a foundation of ‘prior knowledge’ of my cases (Collier 2011, 824). There were two main thrusts of this initial effort. To generate a macro-perspective useful for providing context to the decisionmaking episode at hand, I developed an understanding of the broad political, foreign

¹⁰² Important volumes on process tracing methods published since 2013 include Beach and Pedersen (2013), Bennett and Checkel (2015a). These works build on key works including Mahoney (2010, 2012) Brady and Collier (2010), Collier (2011) and George and Bennett (2005).

¹⁰³ Bennett and Checkel (2015a, Table 1.1, Loc 589) outline ten steps that they consider constitute “Process Tracing Best Practice”.

¹⁰⁴ Research by Fairfield (2013), and Tannenwald (1999) is regularly cited as best practice. Examples that are more directly relevant for my study include books by Kaarbo (2013) and Lundsgaarde (2013).

¹⁰⁵ I fully acknowledge that process tracing is a highly iterative process. While my research certainly didn’t proceed in a neat linear fashion, I nonetheless found myself needing to work through these three broad phases to produce each of my empirical chapters.

Table 3.C: Three Phases of Generating Analytical Explanations of Aid Policy Decisionmaking

Phase 1: Building a foundation of prior knowledge	
Research Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To obtain a historical understanding of aid policy in each state and a contextual understanding of each episode.
Data Sources & research methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data sources examined during this phase were typical materials of ‘contemporary history’: “official government documents, parliamentary reports, newspapers, biographies, contemporary histories, blogs and journal articles” (Gaskarth 2013, 9). Books and journal articles offering historical overviews were sought out. Snowballing—where locating one piece of evidence leads to another—was repeatedly used.
Research outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextual information for each case study country, including timelines of key aid policy events over the past 15 years. “Base-narratives” for each decisionmaking episode, taking the form of detailed storyboards. Base-narratives documented the sequence of events comprising each decisionmaking episode and included lists of the actors I knew were involved and the nature of their involvement. A checklist of key gaps in knowledge for each episode. Target lists for interviews for each episode.
Phase 2: Building Comprehensive Sequential Storylines	
Central Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To generate detailed chronologically-ordered reconstructions of each episode.
Data Sources & research methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritised primary sources during this phase. I reviewed speeches, press releases, policy documents, newspaper articles, budget documents, memoirs, social media (including twitter feeds¹⁰⁶), radio broadcasts, opinion polling, blog posts, YouTube uploads¹⁰⁷ and documentaries. Used ‘at-a-distance’ techniques to understand the motives and perspectives of individual decision-makers, such as thematic content analysis. (V. M. Hudson 2007, 61) Immersion in detail—‘soaking and poking’ (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Loc 527).
Research outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 x physical files containing all relevant documentation (newspaper clippings, official documents, speeches, audio transcripts etc.) for each decisionmaking episode, organised in chronological order. 3x ‘Comprehensive storylines’ reconstructing decisionmaking episodes sequentially in each country, including evidence for the key pressures exerted on each actor (approximately 35,000 words in length).
Phase 3: Crafting theoretically-orientated narratives	
Central Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To generate explanations for why and how aid policy decisions were made.
Data Sources & research methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reauditing data above, including physical files. Re-examining primary sources, especially memoirs, speeches and quotations. Data from elite interviews. Counterfactual analysis.
Research outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Part II (chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) of this thesis.

¹⁰⁶ A tweet by one particular politician led to a long discussion during an interview.

¹⁰⁷ For example, via YouTube I located video of a speech by Peter Lilley, the chair of the Global Poverty Policy Group established by David Cameron following his election as Leader, discussing this process. I also located a speech by Lilliane Ploumen to the Centre for Global Development.

policy and aid policy dynamics operating in my case study countries, focussing on the post-Global Financial Crisis era¹⁰⁸.

A handful of country-specific texts proved particularly useful in providing broad-based introductions to these topics as well as advice on further reading¹⁰⁹. In parallel with developing this macro-perspective, I also began to reconstruct the decisionmaking episodes in question, systematically considering each of the six factors highlighted in the expanded aid policy decisionmaking framework. I mapped each decisionmaking episode to the extent possible, identifying who was involved and when, observing when decision units were formed and how they were configured, and documenting sub-decisions that were reached.

The culmination of this initial foundation-building period was the production of a series of ‘base-narratives’, as recommended by Collier (2011, 828). These narratives documented the sequence of events comprising each decisionmaking episode, taking the form of detailed storyboards. They were accompanied with lists of the individuals I knew were involved, or suspected of being involved, at various stages of each decisionmaking episode. Devising these base-narratives illuminated information gaps, which I reformulated as lists of questions which required answering. Many of these questions were subsequently posed to interviewees, or answered by uncovering additional data.

Phase 2: Building Comprehensive Sequential Storylines

The second phase entailed ‘filling out’ the base-narratives created earlier, in as much detail as possible, in order to provide a denser picture of the scene (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 30). During this phase, I embraced the role of a detective¹¹⁰ and “immerse[d] [my]self in the in the details of the case[s]” (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Loc 527), searching “for all kinds of information about the temporal unfolding of the causal-process [in order to] present a *comprehensive storyline* with a sequence of causal steps” (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 30, emphasis added). I was particularly focused on obtaining and analysing primary sources during this phase. During this period, I actively followed each lead I found, tracing them as far as

¹⁰⁸ For each country, I familiarised myself with: the political system; recent political history; contemporary foreign policy debates; the identity of key political parties, their leaders and their distinguishing policy positions (particularly in relation to international policy); the structure and nature of the foreign policy bureaucracy and the position of aid policy within it; and key policy documents.

¹⁰⁹ Specifically, these volumes were those by Gaskarth (2013), for the UK; Gyngell and Wesley (2007) for Australia; and Andeweg and Irwin (2014) for the Netherlands.

¹¹⁰ Embracing the role of detective is commonly cited practice in the process tracing literature. See, for example, Blatter and Haverland (2012, 105) and Bennett and Checkel (2015a, Loc 510). As Bennett and Checkel suggest, ‘clues’ in this context are equivalent to ‘causal process observations’.

necessary to rule out plausible alternative explanations¹¹¹. At the same time, I systematically probed the potential explanations offered by each of the six clusters of key factors the expanded aid policy decisionmaking framework suggests are likely to shape aid policy. Considerable time and effort was spent during this phase cross-referencing data sources, as conflicting evidence often surfaced, particularly regarding timing and sequencing of events. In response, I settled on a rule whereby each key piece of evidence needed to be confirmed by at least two sources for me to consider it reliable.

The key research output from this phase was a series of three ‘comprehensive storylines’—one for each case study country which incorporated both decisionmaking episodes. These documents included substantial background sections containing relevant contextual information before presenting a reconstruction of the sequencing of ‘what happened’ during each stage of each decisionmaking episode, including tracking the pressures operating on key decisionmakers at each point. These ‘comprehensive storylines’ were approximately 35,000 words in length and, using the Australian example as an indicator, contained references to over 200 unique evidentiary sources (excluding material generated from elite interviews).

Phase 3: Crafting analytical narratives

The process of turning the three comprehensive storylines I developed into convincing theoretically-orientated narratives (George and Bennett 2005, 205) was more challenging than I had anticipated. Having immersed myself so deeply in decisionmaking details and invested so heavily in developing a careful description (Collier 2011, 824) of each aid policy decisionmaking process, it became tempting to view these reconstructions as ends in themselves, rather than as the raw material from which to generate an “analytical causal explanation”¹¹².

To gain perspective, I deliberately allowed substantial time to elapse between turning the creating comprehensive storylines into analytical narratives. This left space for the inductive emergence of the idea of decider salience as a cross-case phenomenon and a potential organising principle around which I could craft explanatory narratives about aid policy change¹¹³. I returned to the comprehensive storylines I had created to test the within-case plausibility of decider salience and aid salience shocks as causal mechanisms. To this end, I reaudited the data

¹¹¹ The process tracing literature refers to this process as ‘soaking and poking’. It is that period during which “one immerses oneself in the details of the case and tries out proto-hypotheses that may either quickly prove to be dead ends or become plausible and worthy of more rigorous testing” (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Loc 527).

¹¹² This term is taken from George and Bennett (2005, 211), who describe ‘analytical explanation’ as a distinct type of process tracing which seeks to convert “historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation couched in explicit theoretical forms.”

¹¹³ Leaving space for inductive insights is a key feature of causal process tracing (Bennett and Checkel 2015a; Blatter and Haverland 2012, 30).

I had collected and sought more evidence where required. I focused on specifying the sequencing of the decider salience mechanism, fact-checking anecdotes and examples that illuminated how this processes proceeded, and identifying and critical junctures (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007) where path dependencies were initiated or consolidated (Bennett and Elman 2006; Mahoney 2000; Pierson 2000)¹¹⁴. I also sought and tested alternative explanations, including by employing counterfactual analysis¹¹⁵.

As I became more convinced about the explanatory power of the decider salience concept, I dramatically revised the comprehensive storylines so that my analytical explanation was built around conveying how salience shifts drove the behaviour of aid policy decisionmakers and hence change. Consequently, much of the granular detail about how decisionmaking processes unfolded ‘fell out’ of the analysis. While these find-grained details were very important in directing me to my eventual explanation, they ultimately often got in the way of the story that needed to be told. Likewise, rather than being constrained by a chronological recounting of events, as in the comprehensive storylines, the analytical narratives presented in are organised more thematically, as they trace the progression of how decider salience drives aid policy change (see Schimmelfennig 2015, Loc. 2367).

3.4.3 Elite Interviews as a Data Source

Elite interviews are typically a vital data source for researchers examining decisionmaking processes. As they did for Lundsgaarde (2013, 16), elite interviews proved crucial in allowing me to “pinpoint the actors who have left a decisive mark on aid choices”¹¹⁶. There were three reasons why data obtained from elite interviews was especially important for this project. First, the contemporary nature of the episodes I investigated meant that there was almost no existing scholarly literature available. Many of the participants involved remain in government or in politics. A second, related, reason interviews were so important concerned the fact that the decisionmaking episodes I reconstructed received very minimal attention from the press. While the publication of the final policy document typically received media attention, the decisionmaking processes that led to them were not widely reported on. Third, first-hand

¹¹⁴ Collier (2011, 824) advises that to “characterize a process, we must be able to characterize key steps in the process, which in turn permits good analysis of change and sequence.”

¹¹⁵ For example, I tested my argument that Rudd’s personal investment in increasing Australia aid spending supplied the initiative and ongoing momentum for aid policy change in Australia by considering what would have likely eventuated in the *absence* of Rudd. Frank Harvey’s (2012) book, *Explaining the Iraq War: counterfactual theory, logic and evidence* is an excellent recent example of counterfactual analysis.

¹¹⁶ Lundsgaarde’s (2013) research entailed conducting 77 semi-structured interviews, or around 20 per country case study. I used this as a rough guide for my own research. Key resources which guided my preparation for interviews were Myers and Newman (2007), Mosley (2013) and Beckmann and Hall (2013)

accounts, especially from participants, proved especially valuable in yielding insight into the ‘psychological environment’ of decisionmakers—a key dimension of the aid policy decisionmaking framework.

During this project, I conducted 51 formal, semi-structured interviews¹¹⁷. These interviews were conducted under the auspices of ANU Human Ethics Protocol Number 2014/426. The interviews generated almost 40 hours of recordings, leading to over 150 pages of transcribed interview data¹¹⁸. Annex 1 lists the individuals I interviewed for this project. Only five of the 51 interviewees requested anonymity, a pleasing result that I partly put down to my promise to interviewees to contact them again to confirm attribution of interview material in the final thesis. Formal interviews averaged just over 49 minutes in length, ranging from twenty minutes to an hour-and-a-half. Most formal interviews were conducted face to face (40 of 51, or 78%), in a range of locations across Australia (Canberra), the Netherlands (The Hague, Amsterdam, Nijmegen) and the UK (Leeds, London, Oxford, York). Nine formal interviews (18% of the total) were conducted by video conference using Skype, with an additional two interviews (4%) conducted via telephone.

From the point at which I began to compile a ‘target-list’ of interviewees, I found it useful to distinguish between ‘participants’ and ‘observers’. Participants were those actors who were directly involved in the decisionmaking episode and whose role made them partly responsible for the decision output (or a sub-output). This way of defining terms sets a high-bar on who I recognised as a participant¹¹⁹. To preserve the anonymity of participants who requested it, I am limited in the detail I can provide. However, it is important to confirm that I interviewed two or more participants for all but one decisionmaking episodes. Overall, I interviewed sixteen individuals who I classified as participants, including two principals (Mitchell and Knapen)—equating to slightly more than 30% (16 of 51) of the total participant pool. Given the very limited

¹¹⁷ I was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol when conducting formal interviews for this product. This protocol was approved by ANU’s Human Ethics Research Committee. The protocol was designed to generate responses to my three most three fundamental information requirements: the structure of the decisionmaking episode (i.e. who was involved and when and how); the perceptions of the decisionmakers involved in the decisionmaking episode; and the perceptions of the decisionmakers influenced the decisionmaking process. The protocol provided me with relatively generic questions in each of the above categories to ensure the flow of the interview was maintained, along with various prompts should I wish to press the interviewee for more detail about a particular response. While some interviews followed the protocol quite closely, many interviews became quite wide-ranging, especially after once I had developed a very detailed knowledge of each decision.

¹¹⁸ The transcribed interviews generated approximately 80,000 words of material.

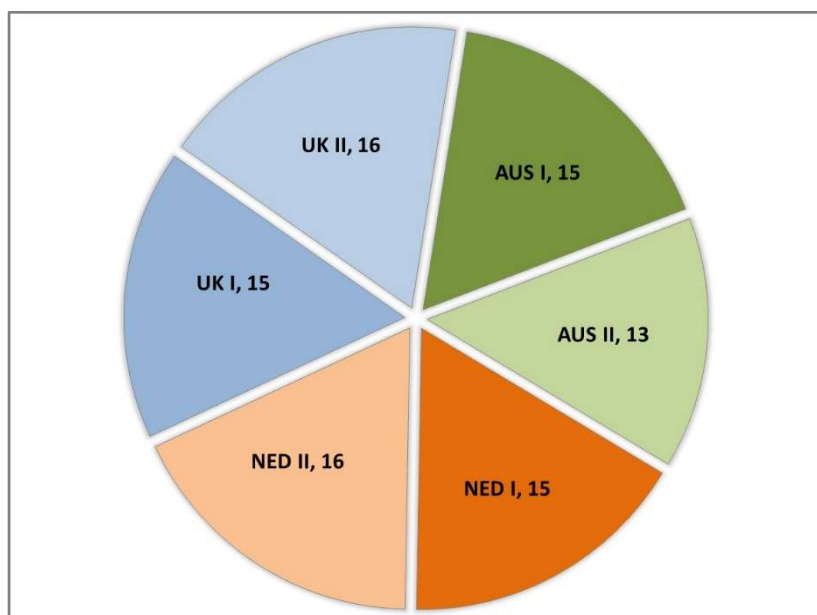
¹¹⁹ This way of defining terms sets a high-bar on who I recognised as a participant. For example, it discounts senior bureaucrats as ‘participants’ unless they were taken offline to participate in the secretariat formed to develop the policy output. Of course, such a senior bureaucrat would obviously remain a valuable ‘observer’.

potential pool of participants, this represents a significant sample, particularly given I interviewed most of the lead or key authors for the White-Paper type policy outputs¹²⁰.

Additionally, as the research progressed, it became more important to seek input from interviewees who, while not participants in one the six episodes being reconstructed, were participants in related episodes that proved equally—and sometimes more—important for telling the story of the aid policy change¹²¹. For example, the insights garnered from interviews with Clare Short and Kathleen Ferrier proved vital to my ability to tell the story of changes in UK and Dutch aid policy respectively, yet these individuals were not participants (as I define the term) in the episodes in question.

As distinct from ‘participants’, I define an ‘observer’, as an individual with an intimate knowledge of a particular aid policy decisionmaking episode. This designation allows for ‘participants’ to also be classified as observers. I sought to keep the number of observers I interviewed across the six episodes roughly similar (see Figure 3.D). Most interviewees could be classified as observers of multiple decisionmaking episodes—usually both episodes in a particularly country¹²²—hence the total number of ‘observers’ adds to well over the number of formal interviews undertaken.

Figure 3.D: Sampling of Observers by Decisionmaking Episode



¹²⁰ To be more specific here would risk potentially disclosing the identities of individuals who have requested anonymity.

¹²¹ For example, it became very apparent early on, in the UK II case, that it would be vital to interview individuals involved in the involved in the Global Poverty Policy Group, which was central to the way Cameron’s modernisation agenda for the Conservative Party progressed in the aid policy space.

¹²² More rarely, an interviewee might have insight into relevant episodes across different countries.

In addition to paying attention to the number of observers I interviewed for each decision, I also sought to interview a variety of types of respondents, to ensure I heard a variety of viewpoints. To this end, I categorised observers into one of six categories: a bureaucrat (e.g. a representative of AusAID, the MFA, DFID or another government agency); a political adviser (e.g. a SPAD in the UK system); a politician; an academic; a member of the development constituency; or a thought leader or member of a think tank (e.g. ODI). To preserve the anonymity of interviewees who requested it, I am not able to publish the breakdown of interviewees by type of respondent.

I transcribed most interviews using transcription software and a transcription pedal. In most cases, I added my own recollections and notes (recorded during the interview or very soon after) to the transcription file at the appropriate places, using a different font to distinguish my thoughts from the interviewee's words. Some interviews did not warrant require full transcription. In such cases, I generally summarised key parts of the conversation, fully transcribing key sections if relevant.

Once the transcribing was near completion, I collated all the interview data for each case study country into a single document. I repeatedly read these documents, highlighting relevant quotes and ideas. I then collected these highlighted sections into a new document of 'key interview material' for each country. Most of this material has been incorporated into the empirical chapters. During the production of the empirical chapters, I regularly returned to key interviews to make sure my account aligned with participants' recollections.

§§§

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter documented how I constructed a recapturing scheme that facilitates examining aid policy decisionmaking from a new perspective. The Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework examines aid policy decisionmaking episodes through a much wider lens than other frameworks currently offered by the literature, precisely because its chief objective is to explicitly incorporate factors from all levels of analysis. The trade-off is that the framework produces detailed snapshots of aid policy dynamics in each aid policy system at a point in time. It is crucial to keep in mind, therefore, that the product that emerges after the framework is applied to a given aid policy decision episode is, at least in the context of this thesis, not an end in itself. The

framework is a means to a more important end; answering the thesis question—why do states change the trajectory of their aid policy?

The decisionmaking episodes I reconstructed represent critical nodes in the history of each aid policy ecosystem in which they occur. By reconstructing them with the Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework, it becomes possible to detect how, and where, and why sources of aid policy change emerge, interact, and intersect. Essentially, the framework turns these decisionmaking episodes into critical junctures that become a point at which the threads driving aid policy change are observable. Tracing these threads then reveals more about how and why aid policy change proceeds.

The four chapters comprising Part II of the thesis convey what I discovered as I radiated out from each of these six nodes, seeking to uncover the key forces that provided the impetus for aid policy decisionmakers to act to change aid policy. However, as I foreshadowed in chapter 1, the central ideas holding these accounts of aid policy change together are the concepts of decider salience and aid salience shocks. In the forthcoming chapter, I present the argument of this thesis by turning my attention to explaining how these concepts underpin an actor-specific theory of aid policy change.

§§§

4 Theorising Aid Policy Change

“We need a much more vigorous effort to characterize the conditions that can produce decisions for dramatic redirection in foreign policy.”

—Charles Hermann, 1990

“What we must decide is whether there are any patterns in the way in which decision makers perform the basic tasks of processing information and making choices that can constitute explanations...”

—David Welch, 2005

“[P]olitical attention is scarce, and it is consequential.”

—Green-Pedersen and Walgrave, 2014

This chapter sets out an **actor-specific theory** of aid policy change. At the heart of this theory are two interrelated explanatory mechanisms: **decider salience** and **aid salience shocks**. These explanatory devices make sense of variations in the attentiveness of powerful political actors to aid issues, which I argue is the key to understanding the dynamics of **aid policy** change at the strategic level.

The first two sections of this chapter describe the creative steps involved in developing the theory. First, I address the significance of actor-specific theorising, highlighting the benefits of this approach in light of the thesis question and the deficiencies in the determinants of aid literature (section 4.1). Then, in the subsequent section, I unpack the concepts I appropriated from the agenda setting literature in order to build the theory of aid policy change (section 4.2). Here I introduce the concept of **issue salience**, highlight the implications of it and explain why the political agenda matters for understanding policy change.

The third section is designed to stand alone as the decisive statement of the theory of aid policy change this thesis advances (section 4.3). As such, it functions as the nucleus of the thesis. It is the point to which the preceding chapters have been leading, and the point from where the remaining chapters obtain their direction.

The chapter concludes with a section documenting the permissive conditions that allow for the operation of the theory of aid policy change I propose (section 4.4). Here I build on the scholarship of Lundsgaarde (2013, 22) to catalogue the characteristics of the aid policy **issue area**. Going further than Lundsgaarde, I argue that aid policy exhibits “a politics unto itself” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 6) *primarily* because of its low salience to political actors.

§§§

4.1 Actor-specific Theorising

I have repeatedly emphasised that the theory of aid policy change advanced by this thesis is an *actor-specific* theory. The role of this opening section of the chapter is to unpack the significance of the ‘actor-specific’ descriptor. I approach this task by addressing three questions. What is actor-specific theory? What are the benefits of actor-specific theorising? And how did I approach the task of building actor-specific theory? Responding to these questions in turn illustrates why actor-specific theorising represents an especially relevant means of answering the question this thesis poses given the faults of the determinants of aid literature.

4.1.1 Actor-specific Theory Explained

To understand what actor-specific theory is, it is helpful to first explain the alternative, and most common, mode of theory construction. Actor-general theories are those that “focus on the state as a unitary actor and systemic as well as relational variables as determinants of action” (V. M. Hudson and Vore 1995, 210). **Actor-general theory** predominates in International Relations. As Hudson (2005, 2) has observed, most “contemporary theoretical work in [International Relations] gives the impression” that the ground of the discipline—the foundational level at which phenomena in the field of study occur[s]” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 1)—lies in *states*.

Most of the time, scholars of International Relations unconsciously think, talk and conceptualise state behaviour as the deliberately considered product of a singular and super-capable, super-calculating entity. A half-century after Graham Allison began to explicitly articulate the assumptions of this “largely implicit conceptual [model]” (1969, 689) as “the ‘Rational Actor Model’¹²³, the standard operating assumption in International Relations remains as follows: “[e]vents in international politics consist of the more or less purposive acts of unified national governments and that governmental behaviour can be understood by analogy with the intelligent, coordinated acts of individual human beings” (Allison and Halperin 1972, 41). The implication of this standard operation assumption is that actor-general theory ‘black boxes’ the “inner workings of nations” (V. M. Hudson and Vore 1995, 210).

There are benefits to operating at this level of abstraction, most notably for developing the type of pared-back, parsimonious theory advocated and produced by Kenneth Waltz (Yetiv 2011a, 11–12). But there are also drawbacks. Actor-general theory leads to a focus on how structure impacts the behaviour of states, a “severe theoretical handicap”, according to Hudson (2005, 4). Because it strips out the agency of individuals, actor-general theory struggles to explain change. “States are not agents” argues Hudson (2005, 2), “because states are abstractions and thus have no agency.”

The FPA subliterature is distinguished from the broader body of International Relations literature owing to its refusal to ‘abstract away’ from the human decisionmaker. “From its inception,” observe Hudson and Vore (1995, 210), “FPA has involved the examination of how foreign policy decisions are made and has assumed that the source of much behavior and most change in international politics is human beings, acting individually or in collectivities.” FPA’s unwillingness to ‘black box’ human decisions makers makes FPA theory “profoundly actor-specific in its orientation” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 3). For Breuning (2017), it is “[t]he actor-centered approach [that] sets foreign policy analysis apart from international relations more generally.”

The numerous theoretical benefits that derive from FPA’s actor-specific orientation flow from one crucial idea. “The single most important contribution of FPA to IR theory” explains Hudson (2005, 3), is to identify that “the point of theoretical intersection between the primary determinants of state behaviour... is *not* the state, it is human decisionmakers.” In short, it is humans that make decisions, not states. And if we are to talk about the state ‘making a decision’, what we are really referring to is decisions made by individuals invested the authority to act “in

¹²³ Allison’s most well-known explication of the Rational Actor Model (RAM) is from *Essence of Decision* (1971), his study of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which was later fully revised in collaboration with Philip Zelikow (1999).

the name of the state” (R. C. Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin 2002, 59). As Rosati (2000, 47) has pointed out, “[i]n reality, countries do not act; people act. States (and organizations) are made up of individuals who act on their behalf.”

“Theory comes in different types and each different type can have different aims” observe Dunne, Hansen and Wight (2013, 407). The benefits and drawbacks of adopting different modes of theorising need to be weighed against the aims and approach of each research project. Explicitly recognising that theoretical intersection occurs within the mind of the individual decisionmaker, rather than at the level of the state, is a theoretical move that “confers some advantages generally lacking in IR theory” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 3)¹²⁴. Crucially for the aims of this thesis, three of the most prevalent of these benefits directly address major deficiencies in the determinants of aid literature.

The strengths of actor-specific theorising predispose such an approach to shedding new light on the dynamics of aid policy change. Specifically, actor-specific-theorising is positioned to further understanding of aid policy change because it: lends itself to generating explanations that integrate levels of analysis; incorporates human agency and thus can account for change; and generates explanations that aim for completeness rather than parsimony. Each of these strengths directly addresses limitations inherent in the existing frameworks offered by the determinants of aid literature. I now move to explicating these benefits in turn.

4.1.2 The Benefits of Actor-specific Theorising

Actor-specific theory Integrates across levels of analysis

In chapter 2, I showed how the determinants of aid literature favours frameworks which each prejudice factors which originate from one level of analysis. Then, in the first section of chapter 3, I argued that the scholarly research on aid has focused predominantly on understanding what impacts of discrete factors have on the shape of aid policy, rather than exploring the interrelationship between factors, especially between factors originating from different levels of analysis. Moreover, those studies that do have an integrative dimension have not ‘stepped down’ decisively into the first level of analysis and expressly incorporated first image factors.

This reluctance has had crucial implications for the prospects of joining up the “discrete and disconnected pieces of the aid puzzle...” (Hook 1993, 44). As I highlighted in the previous chapter, Valerie Hudson (2007, 165) believes “the true promise” of FPA is “theoretical

¹²⁴ For a detailed discussion of these benefits, see Hudson (V. M. Hudson 2005, 3–5).

integration: the integration of theory across... several levels to develop a more complete perspective on foreign policy decisionmaking". The source of this promise is the actor-specific nature of FPA. States do not, and cannot, integrate variables "at many different levels of analysis in order to make a decision" (V. M. Hudson 2014, 204). Rather, humans do this. It is the mind of the individual decisionmaker that functions as the "locus of theoretical integration across levels of analysis" (V. M. Hudson 2002, 5). As described in the previous chapter, this logic underpins the Aid Policy Decisionmaking Framework.

While actor-specific theory certainly begins with the human decisionmaker, it does not end there. In other words, to suggest engaging in actor-specific theorising is the same as a promulgating a 'first image only' model of reality is a false equivalency. Viewing the human mind as the point of theoretical intersection does not deny the existence or importance of domestic or international factors in influencing aid policy change. Rather, it promotes viewing the operation of these factors in a certain way. When 'the state' is assumed to be the unitary entity which integrates variables "at many different levels of analysis in order to make a decision" (V. M. Hudson 2014, 204), as in actor-general theory, the microfoundations of international relations typically become an afterthought at best. Actor-specific theory is more conducive to producing integrated explanations of complex phenomena than actor-general theory because it is easier begin 'closer' to reality before abstracting 'up' levels of analysis than it is to begin with an abstraction and then 'working down' towards reality.

While Hudson is adamant that FPA scholars must strive for theoretical integration, she nonetheless recently conceded that "it remains a promise unfulfilled for the time being" (V. M. Hudson 2014, 204). Studies which set out to "to integrate theory in the sense of channelling both material and ideational factors through the human decisionmaker intersection"—as this thesis does—"are extremely rare" (V. M. Hudson 2005, 20). The most theoretically comprehensive of these rare studies is David Welch's (2005) *Painful Choices: A Theory of Foreign Policy Change*. Welch argues that once it is acknowledged that "[a]ll state behaviour is the product of human decisions"—the starting point originally recommended by Snyder Bruck and Sapin (2002, 59)—then the key task becomes discovering "whether there are any patterns in the way in which decision makers perform the basic tasks of processing information and making choices that can constitute explanations..." (Welch 2005, 23).

Yet even comprehensive integrative efforts which do not rely on conceptualising the human decisionmaker as the "locus of theoretical integration across levels of analysis" (V. M. Hudson 2002, 5) recognise the imperative of 'bringing in' actor-specific perspectives. For example, in

constructing an integrative framework designed to explain the Gulf War in 1991, Yetiv deploys multiple 'perspectives', which each offer "an alternative take on government behavior, *emphasizing different levels of analysis* and types of decision-making" (Yetiv 2011a, 251–52 emphasis added). Alongside the perspectives offered by the Rational Actor Model, Domestic Politics, Groupthink and the Government Politics Model, Yetiv adds a Cognitive perspective which operates at the level of the human mind¹²⁵.

Actor-specific theory accounts for change

In chapter 2, I argued that the existing frameworks offered by the determinants of aid literature to explain aid policy change are capable of explaining change only in a partial and incomplete manner. This limitation is also evident in the broader International Relations literature. As Alden and Aran (2017, 125) testify, we know little about the "sources and conditions that give rise to significant alteration to state foreign policy". These authors also acknowledge that "the role of agency, usually embodied in an individual actor, is a common thread" in accounts which seek to examine the place of change in foreign policy (Alden and Aran 2017, 126).

The inability of actor-general theory to explain change was brought home by the failure of the dominant International Relations theories to predict or explain the collapse of the Soviet Union (C. F. Hermann 1995). Interest in FPA and actor-specific theory was rejuvenated¹²⁶ with this powerful demonstration of the reality that "it is impossible to explain or predict system change on the basis of system-level variables alone" (V. M. Hudson 2014, 32)¹²⁷. Whereas actor-general theories assume states preferences as given, actor specific theory tells us where these preferences originate and why (Yetiv 2011a, 202). Unwilling to black box the human decisionmaker, the "methodological orientation" of FPA ensures it "delves into such agency-oriented concepts as motivation emotion and problem representation" (V. M. Hudson 2005, 4). "If our IR theories contain no human beings" argues Hudson (2005, 3), "they will erroneously

¹²⁵ In related work, Yetiv (2013:2) has shown, through investigation of five prominent decisionmaking episodes in U.S. history, how "cognitive biases were more influential in U.S. decision making and security than commonly believed or understood."

¹²⁶ An important aspect of the post-Cold War rejuvenation of FPA was the conscious reappraisal of the comparative foreign policy (CFP) agenda. An important volume edited by Neack, Hay and Haney (1995) played an agenda-setting role in this reappraisal. The contributors to this volume had a dual goal; to build on the legacy established by the first generation of CFP scholars; and to "correct, extend or revise... earlier undertakings" (C. F. Hermann 1995, 250) in light of the inconsistencies that were manifest during the second generation. According to Hermann (1995, 250–51), the new generation of CFP-ers rejected their forebears ascent to: the hegemony of positivism, realism, general or grand theory and parsimony. On the other hand, they sought to retain the longstanding CFP commitment to contextuality, middle-range theories, bridging to other fields and, most importantly, multilevel, multicausal explanations.

¹²⁷ Similarly, Hermann (1995, 246) observes that "as scholars reflect on the end of the cold war, they increasingly recognize that international relations theories must introduce domestic considerations from within nations."

paint for us a world of no change, no creativity, no persuasion, no accountability.” Actor-specific theory can explain change because it centres on the only entities that truly possess agency¹²⁸.

Actor-specific theory prioritises explanation over parsimony

Actor-specific theory is a distinctly different style of theorising to actor-general theory (V. M. Hudson 2014, 204). Actor-specific theory is at the same time less ambitious in explanatory scope and more ambitious in explanatory depth than actor-general theory. Precisely because it seeks to account for the “contributions of human beings” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 4), actor-specific theory yields explanations of state behaviour that are “fuller and more satisfying”. As a result, actor-specific theory is more contingent and therefore less parsimonious.

In pointing out these differences, it is not my intention to disparage actor-general theorising. My aim is to emphasise that the distinctive approach of actor-specific theory provides utility that is at odds with prevailing views of what constitutes more valuable theorising, views which tend to be informed by the primacy of actor-general theorising in the discipline. In any case, the truth is that actor-specific and actor-general theory are not only complementary but also inextricably connected. Hudson’s (V. M. Hudson 2005, 21) key argument in her influential 2005 article is that actor-specific theory “provides the theoretical micro-foundations upon which actor-general IR theory may be grounded as a social science enterprise.” Hudson’s point is that we need to understand and articulate prevailing actor-specific dynamics (the theoretical micro-foundations) in specific domains in order to be confident that abstracting to the level of the state is a valid move in that particular domain.

The theory advanced in the thesis was developed with reference to the circumscribed domain of aid policy (explicitly conceived as a subset of a state’s foreign policy, as explained in chapter 1). The theory was developed to bring order and understanding to the within-case and cross-case variations I observed in studying recent instances of aid policy change in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands. While the proximate goal was to explain the theoretical microfoundations of strategic-level aid policy decisionmaking, this does not preclude the theory from having both predictive potential and application beyond aid, to other low salience foreign policy issues. (I discuss these possibilities further in chapter 9). The more immediate task I now move to undertake, however, is to discuss the process of building an actor-specific theory of aid policy change.

¹²⁸ “Only human beings can be true agents”, claims Hudson (2005, 2–3) “and it is their agency that is the source of all international politics and all change therein.”

4.1.3 The Process of Actor-specific Theorising

As should be clear from chapter 3, I did not specify the explanatory mechanisms of decider salience and aid salience shocks ex ante. Rather, the theory of aid policy change I present in detail in section 4.3 of this chapter was developed via an inductive process. The building and refinement of the explanatory mechanisms at the heart of my theory of aid policy change emerged from “inductively from close study” of the cases (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Loc 413). As I “immerse[d] [my]self in the in the details of the case[s]” (Bennett and Checkel 2015a, Loc 527), I searched “for all kinds of information about the temporal unfolding of the causal-process [in order to] present a *comprehensive storyline*” (Blatter and Haverland 2012, 30, emphasis added) of aid policy change. As Welch (2005, 23) counsels, I needed to determine if there were “any patterns in the way in which decisionmakers perform the basic tasks of processing information and making choices that can constitute explanations...” of aid policy change.

As I grappled with how to craft analytical narratives¹²⁹ about aid policy change, I began to appreciate the explanatory utility of examining aid policy change through the ‘agenda lens’ (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014b). The appreciation of this ‘pattern’ of decisionmaker behaviour grew over time, beginning with my becoming acquainted with the concept of issue salience, initially via the work of Kai Oppermann¹³⁰. This led me to engage more broadly with the agenda-setting literature, notably the work of John Kingdon (1995) and frequent collaborators Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones (1991, 1993).

The agenda-setting literature provided the conceptual infrastructure on which to build the explanatory mechanisms that underpin the theory of aid policy change this thesis advances. Mechanisms-based explanations of complex phenomenon are becoming increasingly popular, especially for qualitative scholars (George and Bennett 2005, 135; Bennett 2013; Bennett and Checkel 2015b; Checkel 2016). Part of the attraction of “theorising in terms of mechanisms”, argues Checkel (2016, 3), is that it “gives us more determinate, empirically accurate pictures of the social world.”

I adhere to the definition of ‘causal mechanisms’ advanced by Bennett (2013, 466):

“ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities,”

¹²⁹ This term is taken from George and Bennett (2005, 211), who describe ‘analytical explanation’ as a distinct type of process tracing which seeks to convert “historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation couched in explicit theoretical forms.”

¹³⁰ In particular, Oppermann (2010), Oppermann and Viehrig (2011b), Oppermann and De Vries (2011) and Opperman and Spencer (2013).

*thereby changing the latter entities' 'characteristics, capacities, or propensities in ways that persist until subsequent causal mechanisms act upon it'.*¹³¹

Notice how this definition captures how mechanisms-based explanation aligns closely with the research priorities I have been discussing. Mechanisms-based explanations: apply within circumscribed domains (“in specific contexts or conditions”); are actor-specific (“agents with causal capacities”); and they prioritise explanation rather than parsimony¹³².

Beyond these characteristics, Bennett (2013, 461) highlights “two key functional roles” that mechanisms play. First, mechanisms “provide a framework for cumulative theoretical progress”. Second, mechanisms constitute “a useful, vivid, and structured vocabulary for communicating findings to fellow scholars, students, political actors, and the public.” This second role is especially relevant for my purposes. A key claim of this thesis is that scholars, policymakers and activists have had trouble understanding why aid policy changes because they have been looking in the wrong places. The vivid nature of mechanisms provides a powerful way of communicating the essence of an alternative conception of how aid policy dynamics function.

The twin mechanisms underpinning my theory of aid policy change are devices that trace “levels of attention to issues within government over time” (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2006b, 959). While employing such an approach is unique in the scholarship on aid, it is common in the agenda-setting literature. Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014b, 2) relate how the core of the policy-agenda tradition “consists of case studies showing that an understanding of agenda dynamics is crucial for understanding how and why decisions are made”. In the sense that this thesis examines agenda dynamics in the aid policy subsystem, it represents a contribution to the study of policy agendas.

The agenda-setting literature is heavily focused on domestic policy. The role of political attention in influencing foreign policy has been relatively ignored. According to Wood and Peake (1998, 181), this is “undoubtedly because foreign policy is fundamentally different from domestic policy and requires a different rationale for explaining the rise and fall of issue attention.” This thesis goes a step further, and distinguishes what it is that makes aid policy dynamics different than foreign policy dynamics more broadly. While this *idea* is not groundbreaking—“the idea that agenda setting and leadership dynamics differ across issues is an old one” (J. S. Peake 2016, 318)—the implications of this reality have not been explored in the realm of aid policy.

¹³¹ This block quote contains numerous inverted commas because Bennett creates this definition in part by relying on previous work undertaken with Alexander George (George and Bennett 2005, 137).

¹³² “[O]ne of the main costs of focusing IR theorizing on causal mechanisms”, acknowledges Bennett (2013, 467) is “a loss of parsimony.”

In the upcoming section (section 4.2), I explain how I selectively bring to bear some of key concepts and ideas from the agenda-setting literature in order to comprehend aid policy decisionmaking dynamics. Although it would have been possible, and likely illuminating, to frame my explanation of aid policy change around existing frameworks this literature offers, I have resisted doing so. (That said, in the comparative analysis at chapter 8, I discuss further how concepts already briefly mentioned, including policy entrepreneurship, policy gatekeepers and veto players relate to and partially overlap with the concepts I advance). Most clearly, I could have employed John W. Kingdon's (1995) 'multiple streams approach', outlined in his classic *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, first published in 1984. Kingdon models how three categories of independent variables, which he terms the problem stream, the policy stream and the politics stream, come together at critical junctures to produce "windows of opportunity" for agenda setting¹³³. His approach has been widely adopted to understand agenda-setting in comparative policy analysis. In the thirty years since its emergence, it has been used to examine over 300 cases (Béland and Howlett 2016, 223), including aid policy (Travis and Zahariadis 2002). The fact that scholars continue to grapple with the framework testifies to its ongoing relevance (Béland and Howlett 2016).

There is considerable crossover with Kingdon's approach in the theory I propose. For example, Kingdon's identification of the role of policy entrepreneurs, "who are willing to invest their resources in pushing their pet proposals or problems" resonates closely with my explanation of decider salience¹³⁴. That said, there are important distinctions between the theory I propose and Kingdon's multiple streams approach. Most significantly, my conceptualisation of aid policymaking operates from the inside-out. That is, I see change as being initiated by an individual decisionmaker after which domestic and international constraints mediate the ongoing change process. Kingdon views change as occurring via more of an outside-in perspective, whereby domestic and international constraints align at times to create opportune occasions for actors to exercise agency. Furthermore, my analysis of the **issue area characteristics** of aid (section 4.4) suggest that the realm of aid policy decisionmaking is rarely impacted by what Kingdon refers to as the 'problem stream'—which relates to how the public senses government action is required to solve a policy problem. Instead, I argue that the low salience of aid means that the public does not pay attention to aid and, consequently, neither do political actors. (Note that I make a defence of these claims, which are controversial, later in

¹³³ For a recent summary of this Kingdon's multiple streams approach and its impact, see Béland and Howlett (2016).

¹³⁴ This highlights how I could have also chosen to frame my empirical material around the concepts of 'norm entrepreneurs' or 'policy entrepreneurs' (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Mintrom and Norman 2009).

the chapter, at section 4.4.1). Before mounting this argument, however, it is first necessary to relate how the politics of attention influences the political agenda and, in turn, drives policy change. It is this subject to which I now turn.

§§§

4.2 The Politics of Attention: The Political Agenda and Policy Change

“[P]olitical attention is scarce, and it is consequential,” claim Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014a, 6). This section of the chapter is dedicated to explaining the implications of these realities for understanding the aid policy change process. Accomplishing this task requires engaging with the agenda setting literature. However, what follows is *not* a comprehensive review of this vast multi-disciplinary literature. My intention here is much more limited: to unpack the key concepts I appropriated from the agenda setting literature in order to build the mechanisms I created in order to explain aid policy change. I begin this section by introducing the concept of issue salience. The discussion then moves to examine the centrality of the political agenda for driving policy change (subsection 4.2.2) before considering how individual actors may be able to shape the political agenda (subsection 4.2.3).

4.2.1 Issue Salience Explained

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) records that something described as salient is “prominent [and] conspicuous” and stands out in consciousness. This general definition has taken on a more technical meaning in the International Relations literature, where **issue salience**, according to Oppermann and de Vries (2011, 3), refers to “the relative importance or significance and importance that an actor ascribes to a given issue on the political agenda”. This definition raises two additional ideas that are pivotal to the current discussion. In this thesis, I define the **political agenda** as the list of issues to which political actors, and people closely associated with them, devote their attention¹³⁵.

Issue salience is fundamentally an expression of the availability heuristic, the cognitive process (or mental shortcut) which describes how all human beings are prone to behaving with reference

¹³⁵ This definition is an amalgam of the definitions advanced by Kingdon (1995, 3) and Green-Pedersen and Walgrave (2014b, 1).

to the information most readily accessible in their mind (Oppermann 2010, 4). As Oppermann (2010, 4) explains, “actors will concentrate their cognitive capacity primarily on issues which are amongst their uppermost concerns, i.e. which they consider most salient”. Constrained by the inescapable limitations on both their time and attention, humans are forced to pay more attention to some issues than others.

Each actor, therefore, can be conceived as maintaining a **personal salience profile** which reflects the unique way that they personally order the importance of various issues. An actor’s personal salience profile will constantly evolve over time, with some issues becoming more salient as others become less so. The adjustments in this profile are always relative, “since the attention and resources that an actor devotes to an issue cannot be devoted again to another issue” (Hose 2011, Loc. 5639). “Salience is by definition”, explains Oppermann (2014, 27) “a relational concept”, meaning that “[a] specific... issue can only be classified as a high-salience issue relative to another issue”.

Scholars rarely pay attention to individual salience profiles. This is because the preferences of one individual typically have a negligible impact on political decisionmaking. Usually, far more explanatory purchase is achieved by assessing how cumulative preferences influence decisionmaking. Three such aggregations of ‘priority issues’ are especially important: **the political agenda** (the list of issues that political actors within a society collectively pay attention to); the **media agenda** (the list of issues that media actors within a society collectively pay attention to); and the **public agenda** (the list of issues that voters within a society collectively pay attention to) (Lelieveldt and Princen 2011, 208).

The concept of issue salience really only becomes analytically useful when the crucial ‘salience for whom’ question is answered (Oppermann and Viehrig 2011a). In line with the threefold delineation above, international relations scholars have typically examined issue salience from the perspective of the public, intermediary actors (especially the media but also political parties), or political elites (Oppermann and Viehrig 2011a)¹³⁶. The method of measuring issue salience varies according to which of these perspectives is adopted. Opinion polling is the most common way to assess which issues the public considers to be important, typically by asking respondents to identify the ‘most important problem’ facing their nation (Wlezien 2005). For providing insight into which issues the media, political parties, and bureaucracies consider important, content analysis generally proves more useful (e.g. Van Belle 2003). Finally, elite

¹³⁶ Oppermann and Viehrig’s (2011b) edited volume, *Issue salience in international politics*, is structured in three sections to reflect these dominant conceptual lenses.

surveys are often used to understand the issues resonate most for political elites. Such surveys can target parliamentarians (Jäger et al. 2009, 2011) or the foreign policy elite (Riecke 2011).

Although I did not initially conceive of it in these terms, the process of reconstructing aid policy decisionmaking episodes functioned as an indirect way of observing the issue salience of aid for the political actors involved in the process. Reconstructing the decisionmaking episodes allowed me to observe “the actions of elite actors to infer the salience of different issues to them” (Oppermann and Viehrig 2011a, Loc 6534). I was able to infer the salience of aid issues to key political actors in a variety of ways, including by observing: the amount of time political actors and their key staff members devoted to aid-related issues and the extent to which these individuals engaged with the policy detail of an aid policy output; the amount of political capital powerful political decisionmakers were willing to expend to ensure the aid policy output bore their imprint; how eager the political actors involved were to publicise the aid policy output; the degree to which the political actors involved were required to get ‘sign off’ from the Prime Minister, party hierarchy or cabinet colleagues; and the degree of media interest in the decisionmaking process. In short, reconstructing aid policy decisionmaking episodes facilitated making an assessment of how prominent aid was in the minds of key political actors (Oppermann and Spencer 2013, 41).

The collective message conveyed by these inferences—that aid is a low salience issue amongst the political elite—was strongly supported by the testimony of participants and observers, many of whom, without prompting, sought to contextualise these episodes for me by alerting me to the relatively low position that aid issues typically occupied in the political hierarchy. What was impressed on me was that many of the participants and observers close to the aid policy making process were keenly aware that they were working within an issue area characterised by its low issue salience. They took it for granted that the attention of powerful political actors was rarely focused on aid policy issues.

4.2.2 Political Attention is Scarce

Politicians cannot pay attention to everything. “[F]aced with a multitude of competing issues and demands”, explain Bevan and Jennings (2014, 41), “policy makers must decide which issues are most urgent and important to them, prioritising some of them for their attention”. A key way political actors decide how to direct their extremely scarce *personal* time and attention is to focus on those issues which the *public* deems important. In other words, a political actor’s personal agenda will be shaped by the public agenda.

In a democracy, we expect the priorities of parliamentarians to be congruent with that of their representatives (Schoen 2011, Loc. 859; Bevan and Jennings 2014, 39). As Martin et al (2014, 500) explain, the “general idea of democratic representativeness is that there should be a strong correspondence” between “the policy agenda (issues being attended to by government) and a public agenda (issues the public thinks are important).” Furthermore, the link between the policy agenda and the public agenda is more pronounced for more salient issues. Oppermann (2010, 5) confirms that “numerous studies have shown that policy outcomes are more consistent with public preferences in cases of high issue salience than in cases of low issue salience.”

If we can assume that “the government acts on the issues deemed most salient by the public” (Martin et al. 2014, 516), we can likewise assume the inverse; that there is little pressure for governments—and the political actors that comprise them—to act on issues that are not salient to the public (Oppermann and Viehrig 2009, 925). In low salience issue areas, “governments are relatively free to conduct their policies regardless of public opinion” (Oppermann and Viehrig 2009, 925). Such policy are extremely unlikely to be highly scrutinised by the public or the media; “few, if any, people are expected to respond to policy change” (Franklin and Wlezien 1997, 350). The upshot of this is that there is considerable ‘scope for agency’ available to a political decisionmaker with the inclination and capacity to inject themselves into decisionmaking dynamics in low salience domains (J. S. Peake 2001, 72, 80).

However, while the freedom of action possible in low issue domains may attract political actors who seek to ‘make a difference’, there are strong incentives at play that mean elected officials generally eschew such opportunities. The scarcity of political attention governs these incentive structures. For politicians to stay in office, they must be able to demonstrate, to enough voters, that they are representing their interests. They must direct their attention to what the public views as important. In fact, political actors “employ their view on which issues are most salient to their domestic constituents as a heuristic in deciding what information to attend to and which issues to treat as a priority” (Oppermann and Spencer 2013, 40). The tendency for political actors to pay most of their attention to high salience issues becomes self-reinforcing, especially in terms of knowledge acquisition¹³⁷. Furthermore, a decisionmaker stands to wield more

¹³⁷ Hugh White, who is now a Professor of Strategic Studies at the Australian National University but who previously worked as a senior adviser to former Australian Defence Minister Kim Beazley and former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, explained to me how he observed politicians—including those he worked with—becoming familiar with intricate details of highly salience domestic policy issues, such as how to reduce hospital waiting times, because such matters were the predominant concerns raised in communications received from constituents in each politicians electorate. Parliamentarians and their staffers are obliged to pay attention to matters that resonate with their constituents and therefore build an in-depth understanding of them. On the other hand, the knowledge-

‘influence’ (in the narrowly defined political sense of the term) when they pay attention to an issues which attract more attention (Jäger et al. 2011, 5130).

A political decisionmaker involving themselves in a low salience policy issue is not, by definition, engaging in what the public will broadly consider to be meaningful action. “In issue domains that are not salient”, affirm Franklin and Wlezien (1997, 350), “people are not likely to pay attention to politicians’ behaviour.” While investing a degree of their limited time and attention on a low salience issue may afford a political actor the opportunity to effect significant change, this investment has considerable downside. Alongside direct costs to their electoral prospects—paying attention to low salience issues by definition means there is less time less to invest in the high salience issues that the public pay attention to—political actors jeopardise their prospects for promotion by diverting attention away from areas their colleagues, the public and the media consider important. There is a reason why political actors generally ‘make their name’ by demonstrating their competence in managing a large, highly visible, domestic portfolios concerned with the economy, health and education. In contrast, “matters that fail to capture the voters’ attention”, observes Chapnick (2012, sec. 5971);

“tend to be managed by a combination of idealists (who are willing to forsake professional advancement to pursue an issue that resonates personally) and (more commonly) also rans (politicians who for whatever reason, are unlikely to achieve significant power within government).”

4.2.3 Political Attention is Consequential

It matters a great deal where political actors choose to direct their limited supply of time and attention. It is likely to be especially consequential when an issue that is typically absent from the minds of political actors, suddenly moves to being at the forefront of their minds. Once this theoretical ‘attention threshold’ is exceeded, the incentive structures facing political actors would transform, triggering different behaviour and activating the potential for significant policy change, if only for a time. Such moments are then likely to become critical junctures, setting in place a policy trajectory that proves difficult to adjust (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007; Mahoney 2000; Mahoney, Kimball, and Koivu 2009; Pierson 2000).

The idea of behavioural thresholds has proven useful for scholars in a range of disciplines, including International Relations. In his seminal paper on behavioural thresholds, the sociologist Mark Granovetter (1978, 1422) acknowledges adapting the idea from Thomas Schelling, who is

building process for lower salience policy issues, such as defence and international affairs portfolios White advised Beazley and Hawke on, had to be much more self-directed.

perhaps best known for his work concerning nuclear strategy (Ayson 2004). Granovetter (1978, 1422) defines the *threshold* in his conceptual model as being “that point where the perceived benefits to an individual of doing the thing in question... exceed the perceived costs”. His core idea is that, once this threshold is exceeded, the incentive structure for participants to become involved in a social phenomenon (to join a riot, in Granovetter’s paper) is fundamentally altered¹³⁸. More recently, Malcolm Gladwell (2000) popularised the threshold concept by adapting it for a more general audience in his book *The Tipping Point*¹³⁹. As per Granovetter’s work, the tipping point for Gladwell is that point at which social behaviour changes because of a dramatic change in the incentive structure for the actors involved.

The agenda-setting literature sees the tipping point, or ‘behavioural threshold’, as occurring when an issue reaches the political agenda. As Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen and Jones (2006b, 959) relate, an “increase in attention to an issue by government signal the likelihood of serious policy change.” We have seen that the political agenda predominantly reflects the priorities of the public (Martin et al. 2014, 516). Changes in the political agenda are therefore most likely to be caused by changes in the public agenda. In other words, the political agenda is principally shaped via a bottom up process.

Just because the public primarily shapes the political agenda does not mean that individual political actors are precluded from exerting influence over the political agenda. The preferences of political actors *do* influence issue prioritisation (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014b, 7), shaping the political agenda via a top-down process. Political actors can make “conscious efforts to give higher priority to some issues rather than others” (B. D. Wood and Peake 1998, 174), thereby altering the “economy of attention”. These efforts can trigger a tipping point, whereby the degree of attention paid to an issue is sufficient to see it reach the political agenda. Once this attention threshold is exceeded, the decision dynamics are altered. The potential for policy change is drastically heightened. As Opperman (2010, 7) attests, “[f]oreign policy decision-making can be expected to follow an entirely different path in high-salience environments than in low-salience environments”.

Political actors can attempt to initiate policy change, therefore, by making a conscious effort to prioritise a particular issue in order to get it on the political agenda. However, as discussed in

¹³⁸ Granovetter uses the illustration of ‘riot thresholds’ because it is a “convenient and colourful” way of conveying this concept, but explicitly considers his analysis as being much more widely applicable, including other “binary choice situations” in the political realm (Granovetter 1978, 1423).

¹³⁹ Gladwell fused insights from epidemiology with Granovetter’s concepts when collating a series of stories that demonstrated how ‘social epidemics’, such as iconic fashion trends were spawned when a critical juncture, or tipping point, was reached.

the previous part of the chapter, there are significant costs imposed on a political actor who focusses their limited attention on a low salience issue. How might this trade-off be approached in practice? Or, more specifically, what would it take to prompt a powerful political actor—especially a highly-capable and ambitious one—to devote their attention to a low salience issue area such as aid?

Two possible reasons present themselves. First, an individual decisionmaker might be motivated to engage in a low-salience issue area because they are sufficiently personally motivated to enact policy change in that area. Not only does such an actor need to possess a personal salience profile markedly different to the public (and their political colleagues), they must also have, and be willing to spend, the political capital required to devote a portion of their limited attention to the issue. A second reason a political actor might choose to engage in low-salience policy issues is opportunism. When an issue area has low salience, it becomes more vulnerable to being co-opted and deployed as a positioning or signalling device. Precisely because a certain issue area or policy proposal has low salience, politicians will feel more comfortable to ‘play politics’ with it because the cost of doing so is relatively limited (Pijovic 2016).

This section of the chapter has been concerned with explaining how the agenda-setting literature provides insight into policy change. Yet it should not be overlooked that instances of policy change are outliers. Most policies, most of the time, are characterised by policy stability. Political systems “drift incrementally most of the time”, argue Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen and Jones (2006b, 959). A strong status quo bias exists, whereby the incentives to make small, incremental changes usually outweigh the incentives to institute decisive change. Baumgartner and Jones’ (1993) model of punctuated equilibrium explains the tendency for ‘policy subsystems’ to evolve incrementally. This model holds that the status quo bias is interrupted only when “[certain] policies come to the forefront and major political actors begin discussing them; at these times policies can change very rapidly” (Baumgartner, Green-Pedersen, and Jones 2006b, 962). Importantly, for our purposes here, the status quo bias operates in the foreign policy subsystem¹⁴⁰.

I now turn to presenting a theory of aid policy change built to explain instances of rapid and substantial aid policy change. The theory is premised on the key ideas presented in the first two sections of the chapter. The theory is actor-specific. It integrates across levels of analysis. It

¹⁴⁰ For example, Matt McDonald (2013b, 177–78) has shown how, in the Australia context, the “prominence of [foreign policy issues] on the national agenda... can largely be characterized by continuity rather than change.”

entails a mechanisms-based explanation of complex phenomenon and it encapsulates the idea that the potential for policy change is activated when aid issues reach the political agenda.

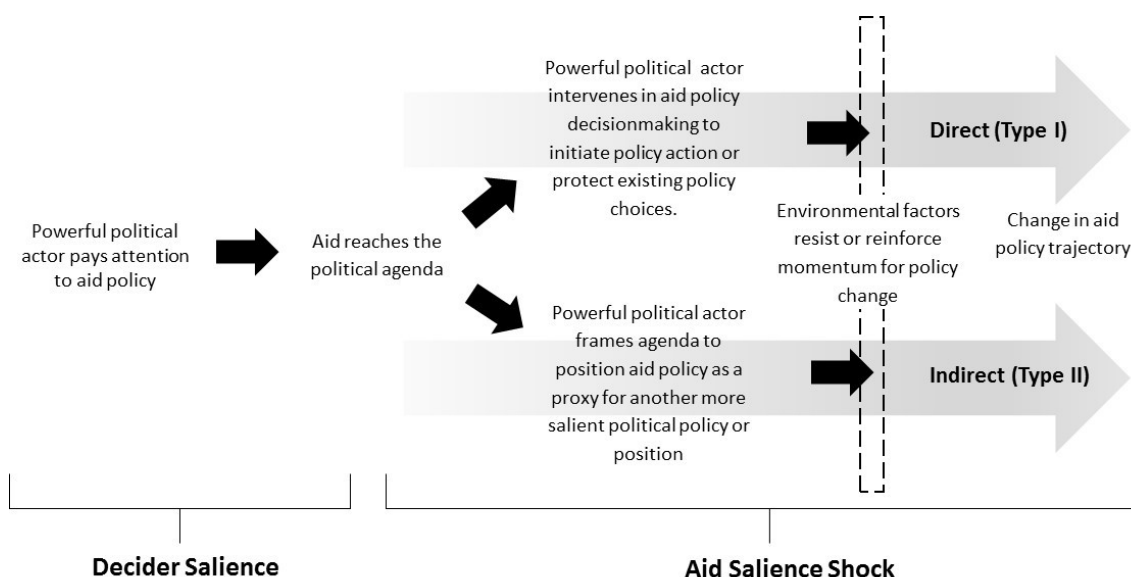
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4.3 An Actor-Specific Theory of Aid Policy Change

This section of the chapter presents an actor-specific theory of aid policy change. This theory constitutes my response to the thesis question: why do states change the trajectory of their aid policy? The two interrelated mechanisms that comprise the theory—decider salience and aid salience shocks—convey that states change the trajectory of their aid policy when powerful political actors pay sustained attention to aid policy issues.

In the opening subsection, I explain the theory of aid policy change in as straightforward manner as possible. This explanation has been designed in such a way so it can stand alone as the decisive statement of the theory (as presently developed). As highlighted earlier, subsection 4.3.1 functions as the ‘nucleus’ of the thesis. After presenting the theory, I elaborate on the two types of aid salience shocks in turn, highlighting the ways in which they propel aid policy change in diverse ways. Figure 4.A below—an expanded version of Figure 1.A presented in chapter 1 — visually depicts the material presented in this section, serving both as a useful roadmap for the discussion ahead and a reference point to return to if required.

Figure 4.A: Aid Salience Shocks as Pathways to Aid Policy Change



4.3.1 *The Theory Explained*

Aid issues have low salience and therefore are typically absent from the political agenda. For a range of reasons that I describe in more detail in the concluding section of this chapter (section 4.4) aid issues are rarely at the forefront of the minds of political actors. However, on those occasions when aid issues do reach the political agenda, I argue that they pass through the ‘bottleneck of attention’ via a top down process driven by decider salience. Decider salience refers to the degree to which an individual political actor considers an issue to be personally important and hence worth dedicating serious and sustained attention to. If an aid issue is sufficiently personally important to a political actor—that is, it aid issues exceed that actor’s personal salience threshold—they will endeavour to put aid on the political agenda. If this effort is successful, with aid reaching the political agenda and staying on it for a sustained period, other political actors will be obliged to pay attention to aid. Suddenly the degree of attention aid issues receives shifts from the usual baseline level. An aid salience shock results.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a ‘shock’ as “a disturbance in the equilibrium or permanence of something” (Merriam-Webster 2003). An **aid salience shock** describes a prolonged disturbance in the usual degree of attention paid to aid issues by powerful political actors. Aid salience shocks are akin to economic shocks, which are substantial deviations from an economy’s long-term trajectory. Formally I define an aid salience shock as an instance of an aid policy issue reaching the political agenda and staying on it for a sustained period of time. It follows, therefore, that during aid salience shocks, political actors pay more attention to aid than is usually the case. Heightened attention is afforded to aid issues until policy change is achieved or until the individual political actor (or actors) responsible for triggering the aid salience shock loses their ability to influence the political agenda, or their desire to do so. The ‘rules of the game’ shaping aid policy decisionmaking dynamics (explicated in detail in section 4.4), can only be superseded for a certain period before a return to the low-salience status quo. In time, the salience afforded to aid issues by political actors will inevitably revert to that afforded it by the public. The period of time a given aid salience shock lasts varies. As per economic shocks, an aid salience shock may deliver its transformational effects over a relatively short timeframe of a year or so, or, in some cases, over a prolonged period of up to a decade.

Once initiated, an aid salience shock acts as a force that ‘pushes’ the trajectory of aid policy in a particular direction. Just like physical forces, aid salience shocks are vectors; they have a magnitude and a direction. Additionally, more than one aid salience shock can be operating at any given time— there might be more than one reason why aid is on the political agenda at a

given point. In these circumstances, the ‘forces’ generated by each aid salience shock may either reinforce or counteract each other, depending on the intensity and direction of each.

By conceptualising and aid salience shock as a force, it becomes possible to identify the range of factors that resist or reinforce the momentum for policy change and the degree to which they do so, regardless of the level of analysis such factors originate from. In other words, tracing the path of an aid salience shock as it ‘travels through’ an aid policy subsystem over time highlights the factors which act to impede or assist aid policy change. In this sense, aid salience shocks function as the conceptual equivalent of tracer dye used in medical diagnoses. While not a constituent part of the system being investigated, aid salience shocks, like tracer dyes, nonetheless illuminate how that system is functioning.

Together, the explanatory mechanisms of decider salience and aid salience shocks constitute an actor-specific, middle range theory of aid policy change. The theory is actor-specific in that it clearly views individual political actors as decisive in initiating aid policy change, as well as sustaining the momentum for change. As I have explained, decider salience encapsulates the view that aid issues reach and stay on the political agenda via the agency of a powerful political actors. However, it is vital to recognise that just because the theory is actor-specific does not mean it discounts the role of structure. Nor, as I have already pointed out, does it ignore the policy shaping influence of non-first image factors.

The explanatory mechanisms complement each other by focusing on distinct aspects of the change process. Decider salience captures how and why the aid policy change process is initiated and sustained. On the other hand, an aid salience shock conceptualises how, once initiated, the momentum for change flows through the aid policy subsystem. Although I concede that fully unknotting the agency-structure entanglement is ultimately impossible, it is helpful to view the explanatory focus of decider salience as falling on agency, while the explanatory focus of aid salience shocks is on structure (see Table 4.A, below). While the agency of powerful actors primarily determines how aid issues reach and stay on the political agenda, domestic and international factors primarily determine the nature and extent of the policy change that results. In this way, the theory of aid policy change responds to the emerging view that many of the puzzles on the scholarly agenda “demand answers that combine social and institutional structure and context with individual agency and decision-making” (Bennett and Checkel 2015b).

The theory of aid policy change presented here encapsulates the idea that states change the trajectory of their aid policy when powerful political actors pay attention to aid issues. Yet earlier, in subsection 4.2.2 of this chapter, I explained how strong incentives are at work preventing political actors from dedicating significant portions of their time and attention to low salience issues. Ahead, in the concluding section of this chapter (section 4.4), I describe in more detail the reasons why actors are incentivised to ignore aid issues. The immediate task I now turn to, however, is to resolve the tension between what might appear to be inconsistent claims: that aid policy change occurs when powerful political actors pay attention to aid issues; and that political actors have little incentive to prioritise aid issues. When do both of these conditions hold? Or, in other words, what leads a political actor to actively choose to put aid issues on the political agenda despite the strong disincentives for them to apportion their limited attention in this way?

Table 4.A: The Complementary Explanatory Roles of Decider Salience and Aid Salience Shocks

	Decider Salience	Aid Salience Shock
Definition	The degree to which a political actor is personally motivated to devote serious and sustained attention to an issue.	An instance of an aid policy issue reaching the political agenda for a sustained period
Conceptual Focus	Describes how aid issues reach, and stay on, the political agenda.	Describes the passage of aid policy change once aid issues are on the political agenda, revealing which factors impede or enable change.
Explanatory Focus	How individual agency prompts and sustains the momentum for policy change	How structure (social, institutional, and international) shapes policy change

My research shows that powerful political actors pay sustained attention to aid issues for one of two reasons: either they maintain a personal interest in aid issues, and seek to change aid policy in accordance with this interest; or they identify aid policy as a politically useful proxy to demonstrate or signal their position on a more salient political issue or position. Aid issues exceed the threshold level of decider salience when an individual actor seeks to effect policy change for direct or indirect reasons. This allows for a classification of types of aid salience shocks by initiating actor motivation (see Table 4.B below).

Direct (Type I) salience shocks occur when the initiating political actor's primary motivation is to attempt to change aid policy directly, in accordance with their views. In contrast, indirect (Type II) aid salience shocks occur when the initiating political actor's primary motivation is to use aid policy change as a means for achieving another political end. The approach to aid policy change adopted by the initiating actors in each of these cases is fundamentally different. A political actor initiating direct aid salience shocks asks 'what can I do for aid?' On the other hand, a political

actor initiating an indirect aid salience shocks asks “what can aid do for me (and my political cause)?” As might be expected, the ways political actors behave to effect policy change are different in each of these cases. Below, I elaborate on these differences as I describe the functioning of each type of aid salience shock in turn.

Table 4.B: Two Types of Aid Salience Shocks

	Direct Aid Salience Shocks	Indirect Aid Salience Shocks
Classification	Type I	Type II
Why initiating political actor/s seeks to put aid policy on political agenda	Initiating actor is personally motivated to change aid policy in a certain direction.	Initiating actor sees an opportunity to politicise aid policy.
Posture of initiating political actor/s	“What can I do for aid?”	“What can aid do for me (and my political cause)?”
Key means of influencing desired policy change	Direct intervention in the aid policy decisionmaking process, either to initiate policy action or protect existing policy choices.	Framing of agenda to position aid policy as a proxy for another more salient political policy or position.
Preconditions for action	A powerful political decisionmaker/s has the inclination and opportunity to intervene in aid policy decisionmaking to further an aid-related policy agenda.	When taking a position on aid policy issue represents a relatively low-cost way for initiating actor to position themselves/their party in a politically beneficial way in relation to a more salient political issue or position.

4.3.2 Direct (Type I) Aid Salience Shocks

I explained earlier how governments (and the political actors that comprise them) are incentivised to align their policy agenda with public preferences. As policymakers are constrained in the number of issues they can address in office (Dellis 2009, 204), there is reduced *political* motivation to act on issues that not salient to the public (Oppermann and Viehrig 2009, 925), such as aid. Yet in many cases, individuals enter politics precisely because they desire to effect change in policy areas of special interest or relevance to them personally¹⁴¹. For this reason, the impact of *personal* motivation to act on issues that are not salient to the public should not be discounted.

When the personal salience profiles of political actors give high priority to aid issues, these actors will seek opportunities to exercise agency in this policy arena. Yet just because a political decisionmaker is *motivated* to pay personal attention to aid issues does not automatically imply

¹⁴¹ It is also possible, of course, for politicians to become passionate about a particularly policy issue once elected.

they will be *capable* of triggering an aid salience shock¹⁴². So, while a decisionmaker's personal motivation to prioritise aid issues is a necessary condition for the formation of a direct aid salience shock, it is not a sufficient condition. To trigger a Type I salience shock, a political decisionmaker must combine their interest in aid issues with sufficient authority and or influence to shape the political agenda.

In practice, only a handful of political players enjoy the degree of discretionary agency required to single-handedly place a low salience issue on the political agenda and keep it there over a sustained period. Likewise, only senior figures typically possess the authority to inject themselves (either formally or informally) into decisionmaking episodes concerning issues areas outside their direct responsibility, especially when these decisions are budgetary in nature¹⁴³. Two of the three direct aid salience shocks documented in this thesis (refer Table 4.C below) were a consequence of the direct and ongoing discretionary agency of an Opposition Leader who became Prime Minister (Kevin Rudd in the case of SS1 and David Cameron in the case of SS3). In the remaining case (SS2), the strong support of Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor Gordon Brown was pivotal to Clare Short's aid policy shifting success.

To further their respective goals, I found that key actors engage in aid policy decisionmaking in two distinct ways during direct aid salience spikes: to *initiate* policy reforms and to *protect* the policy reforms they initiated. By *initiating* aid policy reforms, powerful political actors can 'lock in' policy path dependencies that help secure aid policy trajectories that align with their personal visions. For example, Kevin Rudd, while Opposition Leader, committed the Labor Party to expanding Australia's aid spending to 0.5% of GNI by 2015. David Cameron, upon becoming Opposition Leader in the UK, initiated a policy review process which saw aid become a priority issue and later committed to matching Labor's 0.7% commitment. And Clare Short initiated a pair of White Papers which helped established DfID as a powerful, policy-oriented agency in Whitehall with a poverty reduction focus.

Powerful political actors also work to secure aid policy reforms by *protecting* the reforms they initiated. Kevin Rudd exercised his authority to influence budget allocation processes in order to

¹⁴² Breuning (2013) has demonstrated, using the example of former Belgian State Secretary for Development Cooperation, Reginald Moreels, that it is very possible that, despite their best efforts, leaders who are passionate about reforming aid policy can be prevented from doing so by circumstances outside their control. Their scope of action can be limited by the 'bureaucratic web' they operate within and their domestic audience (Breuning 2013, 311) amongst other factors.

¹⁴³ The 'discretionary agency' a political decisionmaker possesses becomes even more important when the desired policy change involves shifts in expenditure, as major budgetary decisions require approval via party or cabinet processes, such as the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) in Australia or the Public Expenditure (PEX) Committee in the UK.

keep his '0.5% project' intact. Similarly, David Cameron single-handedly faced down extreme pressure within his own party to back down on the decision to ring-fence aid spending on at last two occasions. Short, on the other hand, was confident in engaging in repeated bureaucratic turf wars with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) because she knew she could rely on the support of Blair and Brown. Finally, while no such example was documented in this thesis, it is theoretically possible for direct aid salience shocks to lead to decreases in aid spending, should that be the prime motivator for a powerful individual actor to pay attention to aid policy.

Table 4.C: Summary of Direct Aid Salience Shocks

	SS1	SS2	SS3
Country	Australia	UK	UK
Name	Rudd aid salience shock	Short aid salience shock	Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shock
Key Political Decisionmaker/s (position/s)	Kevin Rudd (Opposition Leader, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs)	Clare Short (Secretary of State for International Development)	David Cameron (Opposition Leader, Prime Minister) Andrew Mitchell (Shadow/Secretary of State for International Development)
Supporting Political Decisionmaker/s (position/s)	Bob McMullen (Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance)	Tony Blair (Prime Minister) Gordon Brown (Chancellor of the Exchequer)	George Osborne (Shadow Chancellor / Chancellor of the Exchequer)
Aid Policy Objective	Increase aid spending to 0.5%	Establish DFID as powerful agency focussed on poverty reduction. Increase aid spending.	Increase aid spending to 0.7%
Impact on Aid Spending	Increase	Increase	Increase
Duration	2006-2012	1997-2003	2006-2013

4.3.3 Indirect (Type II) Aid Salience Shocks

The key difference between direct and indirect aid salience shocks is the motivation of the initiating actor. Whereas a direct aid salience shock emerges because a powerful political actor cares deeply enough about an aid policy preference to try and effect change, an indirect aid salience shock is motivated primarily by political opportunism. In the case of an indirect aid salience shock, aid issues gain the attention of a powerful political actor when they recognise the potential to politicise an aid policy issue to convey a wider message.

As Mintz and DeRouen (2010, 149) acknowledge, political actors have a degree of control over the "manner in which an issue is presented'. By actively **framing** how the public views, engages

with, or understands aid issues, political actors can “affect how the public views a particular situation” (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010, 149). According to Entman (1993, 52), to frame is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”

During an indirect aid salience spike, aid policy change proceeds via a process I call **salience attachment**: an aid policy issue becomes increasingly intertwined with, or symbolically linked to, another more salient issue over time as a result of framing by political actors¹⁴⁴. As this process salience attachment proceeds, aid gradually ‘takes on’—or ‘acquires’—the salience of the more salient issue to which it has become politically linked. In effect, political actors ‘send a message’ indirectly, using a position on aid as a signifier or indicator of their perspective or position on another issue. Once mature, the salience attachment process leads to an aid issue effectively ‘standing in’ for another issue or position. By this point, an aid issue often takes on a symbolic or totemic role in a public debate or political context: “[t]he frame operates as a lens through which the public looks at and examines the situation” (Mintz and DeRouen Jr. 2010, 150). As Table 4.D below summarises, in the four indirect aid salience shocks uncovered during this research, aid issues were co-opted, or actively politicised, to convey a variety of messages.

Before concluding this section, a final clarification is in order. The seven total instances of aid salience shocks highlighted earlier in Table 4.C and below in Table 4.D, may inadvertently suggest aid policy issues are almost permanently on the political agenda. This is far from the case in reality, for reasons I elaborate on in the forthcoming section (section 4.4). What an aid salience shock is designed to capture is *relative* changes in the degree of attention paid by political decisionmakers to aid issues. Precisely because aid issues occupy virtually none of the attention of political actors virtually all of the time (excluding whose ministerial remit includes aid policy), any small movement above this very low threshold of attention is significant. The level of attention a powerful political actor pays to aid issues during an aid salience shock, therefore, is not intended to be compared against any other issue area. That is, the ‘shock’ in salience experienced during an aid salience shock is relative to the level of attention typically paid to aid policy, and not calibrated against any other policy area. Even during an aid salience shock, then, the overall level of attention paid to aid policy by the key framers or actors, as a

¹⁴⁴ Tracing political salience shocks is not as straightforward as tracing personal salience shocks. This is largely because the individuals who function as the progenitors and sustainers of the former are not as readily identifiable as the latter. Moreover, the salience attachment process occurs over considerable time and is often only evident once it is mature, whereas the salience superseding process triggering personal salience shocks is relatively easily observed. It is not always clear who is framing aid for political purposes and how and why they are doing it.

proportion of their overall ‘attention capacity’, remains very small. (To couch this in language introduced earlier in subsection 4.2.3, the ‘attention salience threshold’ for aid issues is very low).

Table 4.D: Summary of Indirect Aid Salience Shocks

	SS4	SS5	SS6	SS7
Country	Australia	Australia	UK	The Netherlands
Name of indirect salience shock	Budget deficit aid salience shock	Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock	‘Tory modernisation’ aid salience shock	‘Elite hobby’ aid salience shock
How aid was framed / what it symbolised	Cuts to aid spending demonstrated the Coalition was serious about ‘fixing’ the budget deficit.	Aid policy functioned as an ideological wedge between the Liberal party’s dominant factions.	0.7% commitment demonstrated that the Conservative Party had modernised. It was no longer the ‘nasty party’.	The commitment to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA is an ‘elite hobby’ of an outward-looking cultural and political elite
More salient issue/s to which aid became attached	Economic management	Party Leadership / Approach to Deficit Reduction	Trust / Political Identity	Immigration / European integration
Key Framers / actors (position)	Tony Abbott (Prime Minister) Joe Hockey (Treasurer)	Tony Abbott (Liberal Party Leader) Julie Bishop (Deputy Liberal Party Leader)	David Cameron (Opposition Leader / Prime Minister)	Geert Wilders (Leader of the PVV)
Impact on Aid Spending	Decrease	Decrease	Increase	Decrease
Duration	2013-2014	≈2011-2014	2006-2013	≈2008 – 2012

The key to an aid salience shock and its capacity to generate policy change is not only that an aid policy issue repeatedly gains attention from powerful decisionmakers over a sustained period of time but that it does so *for the same reason*. The fact that relatively small shifts in the attention of powerful political actors can trigger the policy change is itself a testament to the low salience of aid and the very low baseline of attention this policy issue typically receives. The shifts in the attention to aid policy issues captured by an aid salience shock will typically go unnoticed by the public and the media. And they will also often go unnoticed to many people working in government. Explaining why aid issues have such low salience is the subject to which we turn in the concluding section of this chapter.

§§§

4.4 The Characteristics of the Aid Policy Issue Area

This section documents the permissive conditions that allow for the operation of the theory I have just described. By explicitly cataloguing the ‘issue area properties’ of aid policy, I build on the scholarship of Lundsgaarde (2013, 22)—the scholar who has done the made the most important contribution to systematically explaining the “characteristics of the aid issue area” (2013, 21)¹⁴⁵. Like Lundsgaarde, I consider aid policy making to “display[s] a set of dynamics that distinguishes this issue area from other domestic and foreign policy problems...” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 6)¹⁴⁶.

While numerous scholars have acknowledged that aid policy decisionmaking is characterised by the low salience of aid (Lundsgaarde 2013, 23–24; Wlezien 1995, 984; Moravcsik 2004, 360), I go further by contending that aid policy exhibits “a politics unto itself” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 6) *primarily* because of its low salience to political actors¹⁴⁷. This reality singularly defines the ‘rules of the game’ for aid policymaking, as they relate to the involvement of political actors (see Figure 4.B below). Rather than representing inviolable conditions, these rules should be viewed as ‘rules of thumb’ which can reasonably be assumed to hold most of the time.

In essence, this concluding section of the chapter justifies the fundamental assumption that underpins my theory of aid policy change. I argue that political actors devote very little attention to aid policy primarily because aid issues have low issue Salience (subsection 4.4.1) but also because aid policy is complicated (subsection 4.4.2) and there are no aid policy ‘crises’ (subsection 4.4.3).

¹⁴⁵ This quotation is the title of a subheading of a section in Chapter Two of Lundsgaarde’s book *The Domestic Politics of Foreign Aid* (Lundsgaarde 2013, 21–24), a section which has heavily influenced my thinking about aid as an issue area. Lundsgaarde (2013, 22) draws explicitly Theodore Lowi’s (1964) work “on the relevance of issue area characteristics in the study of politics” in building a framework to capture the determinants of donor aid choices. Lundsgaarde (2013, 22) has also best articulated why delineating issue area properties is so important for aid-focused research engaging in comparative foreign policy analysis: “Attention to issue area properties can be useful in comparative foreign policy analysis in understanding convergence in policy outputs in different national settings, as cross-national commonalities can be understood to reflect the underlying properties of the issue. At the same time, taking the characteristics of the issue area as a starting point in comparisons of foreign policy choices can also ground explanation for cross-national policy divergence because specifying the nature of the issue area highlights similarities in the locus of policymaking and the types of actors involved across countries”.

¹⁴⁶ Otter (2003, 124) is another scholar who considers aid policy as “a unique area of public policy formulation.”

¹⁴⁷ Although Lundsgaarde pays considerable attention to the low salience of aid (2013, 23–24), his appraisal of aid as an issue area leads him to hone in examining how the impact of interest group politics and bureaucratic involvement shape aid policy choices. At least in part, this reflects a methodological choice to focus on understanding and explaining why *major* shifts in aid policy trajectories occur and doing so with a framework that views the individual decisionmaker as the locus of theoretical integration (refer Chapter Two). In contrast, Lundsgaarde (2013) and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015), to take two prominent examples, are more interested in explaining aid policy change over longer periods of time and more granular levels of policy formation.

Figure 4.B: Rules of the Game: Aid policy Decisionmaking Dynamics at the Strategic Level

- i. Political actors and the public usually pay negligible attention to aid policy issues.
- ii. Political actors and the public have a poor understanding of aid policy issues.
- iii. Aid policy is conducted ‘under the radar’ by elites with heavy involvement from the bureaucracy and the development constituency.
- iv. Incremental change typically marks aid policy, with a strong adherence to the ‘status quo’ bias. While a state’s aid policy is constantly evolving, abrupt changes in the trajectory of aid policy at the strategic level are rare.
- v. Aid policy decisionmaking does not regularly feature the active involvement of the state’s most powerful political actors.
- vi. For powerful political actors who *are* personally interested in aid issues, there exists a considerable *scope* for agency.

4.4.1 Aid Issues have Low Issue Salience¹⁴⁸

The overwhelming majority of the voting public demonstrate a distinct lack of interest in, and understanding of, international affairs (Hill 2003, 262–63). This disinterest and lack of understanding is even more pronounced when it comes to aid policy. Quite simply, aid is not an important political issue (McLean and McMillan 2009). For reasons outlined in more detail in section one, because aid issues are not salient for voters, they are not prioritised by political actors (Martin et al. 2014, 516). McKeown argues that when U.S. President’s involve themselves with issues of aid spending, it is an example of micromanagement—in other words, “concern with administrative questions that would ordinarily be seen as much too unimportant to merit presidential attention” (McKeown 2005, 325). In a comment specifically relating to Canada but broadly applicable across Western democracies, Adam Chapnick (2012, Loc. 5975) acknowledges that “there is little incentive for today’s party leaders to spend significant time thinking about—or developing strategy to promote—effective outcomes in international development assistance”. The reason, in Chapnick’s (2012, Loc. 5993) reckoning, is directly related to the low salience of aid: “it is rare that a prime minister will strive to effect radical change in an area that does not produce votes”.

While well established in the scholarly literature, the claim that aid issues are not salient for the voting public is one that demands substantiation, not least because aid advocates and campaigners often vigorously reject it. Typically, aid proponents will point to opinion polls recording high levels of absolute support for the provision of aid in Western countries as evidence that voters see aid as important. Indeed, in a their recent survey of the public opinion and aid literature, Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson (2012b, 9) found that that absolute support

¹⁴⁸ Parts of this section are drawn from Day (2016).

amongst voters in rich, Western countries for the provision of aid averages around 70%. And recent polling from Australia¹⁴⁹, the Netherlands¹⁵⁰ and the UK¹⁵¹ (albeit to a lesser extent) all show that the public supports the provision of development assistance.

It is a mistake, however, to assume “that high levels of articulated support readily translate into *political* support...” (D. Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson 2012b, 10, emphasis in the original). The reason absolute support for aid does not translate into political support for aid, according to Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson (2012b, 10), stems from “a lack of salience amongst competing policy issues”. In other words, *support* for aid should not be conflated with the *salience* of aid (D. Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson 2012b, 9). Lindstrom and Henson (2010, 4) agree, summarising that “[p]eople generally agree with helping the poor in development countries in principle, but their support for aid spending tends to be less robust, while being easily deflected by accusations of wastage and corruption.”

Polls that ask respondents to identify the most important problem (or issue) are typically viewed as the best way for determining issue salience for the public (Oppermann 2010, 6; Wlezien 2005, 556). In polls that specifically seek to capture the *relative* importance of issues to voters, aid issues do not register¹⁵². One explanation for this may be that the public just do not make sure fine-grained distinctions between foreign policy and aid policy¹⁵³. In any case, what is clear is that aid issues are less salient than most other foreign policy issues, which have low salience to begin with (Lundsgaarde 2013, 46; D. Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson 2012b, 10; Gyngell and Wesley 2007, 160).

¹⁴⁹ In their recently published survey of omnibus Australian public opinion polls conducted between 2011 and 2015, Burkot and Wood (2015, 8) show that respondents consistently register a high level of general support for foreign aid (even though the public also registers their simultaneously strong support for cutting the aid budget).

¹⁵⁰ For summaries of Dutch support for development aid, see Spitz, Muskens, and van Ewijk (2013, 25–31) and Kamphof, Spitz, and Boonstoppel (2015, 33–41). A poll from 2011 revealed that 64% of respondents thought development cooperation was ‘very important’, as opposed to less than 10% who considered it ‘very unimportant’ (Spitz, Muskens, and van Ewijk 2013, 28). More recent polling has also found development cooperation is supported by around two-thirds of the Dutch public (Kamphof, Spitz, and Boonstoppel 2015, 33).

¹⁵¹ The picture that emerges from the UK is somewhat more confusing than in Australia and the Netherlands, demonstrating the extent to which the precise rendering of survey questions determine definitions of ‘support’ in Australia and the UK (Rentoul 2015). While polling in 2010 suggested a growing number of voters (around 70%) thought aid should be cut to address the deficit (Lindstrom and Henson 2011, 2). However, a 2013 Eurobarometer poll found that 67% of people in the UK said that “we should keep (54%) or increase (13%) our promise to increase aid to development countries” (Rentoul 2015). Useful overviews of UK public opinion and aid include Glennie, Straw and Wild (2012) and Lindstrom and Henson (2011).

¹⁵² During my research, I did not come across a single ‘most important issue’ issue where aid or development policy registered on the listed results.

¹⁵³ For example, in research requiring them to delineate ‘policy agenda codes’, Martin et al (2014, 503) chose to “collapse Defence and International Affairs and Foreign Aid into one category because we do not believe that the public makes such fine distinctions”.

How can the apparent discrepancy between the high levels of public support for aid found in polling and the low salience of aid be explained? A key finding from Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson's survey is that much opinion polling on aid suffers from measurement validity; that is, many polls fail to "measure the concepts they intend to" (2012b, 6). A particularly difficult problem for opinion polling to overcome is the public's "extremely high degree of ignorance about what [aid] does" (Riddell 2007, 111)¹⁵⁴. One manifestation of this ignorance is that most people equate official aid with humanitarian aid. This means that, when asked for their views on their government's 'aid' program, many survey respondents likely have in mind what might better be termed 'humanitarian aid', when in fact this accounts for a relatively small proportion of aid budgets. Another manifestation of the public's lack of knowledge of government aid programs relates to the public's vastly inflated perceptions about the size of aid budgets, a phenomenon that crosses political jurisdictions (Riddell 2007, 111)¹⁵⁵. These results suggest that it is very difficult to take at face value polls which seek to ask the public whether they would like to see the aid budget expanded or decreased¹⁵⁶.

A striking finding from my interview research was the degree to which participants and observers of the aid policy decisionmaking episodes I examined understood that they were working in an issue area characterised by low salience. "There are no votes in aid", was a phrase I heard repeatedly, along with Ian Smillie's maxim that public support for aid is "a mile wide and an inch deep" (quoted in D. Hudson and vanHeerde-Hudson 2012b, 5). Invariably, those individuals who I found to have the most sophisticated understanding of the politics of the aid issue area in a particular jurisdiction were the most aware of the constraints imposed (and opportunities created) by the low salience of aid and the incentive structure this invariably created; they understood the peripheral place of development policy in the political ecosystem and acted accordingly¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵⁴ Likewise, Hudson and VanHeerde-Hudson (2012b, 16) report that "[o]ne of the more robust findings from survey research is that the public possesses very little knowledge of development aid programmes." See also Riddell (2007, Chapter 7) for an overview of public support for aid, including an account of the shallow understanding the public has of aid issues.

¹⁵⁵ Understanding of aid policy is limited in Australia, the Netherlands and the UK (Lindstrom and Henson 2011, 17).

¹⁵⁶ Burkot and Wood (2015, 8) acknowledge that "[o]ne of the clearest findings [of their survey of Australian public opinion on aid] is that Australians' knowledge about the size of Australian ODA is limited". See also Day (2014a) and Rentoul (2015).

¹⁵⁷ A key example was the way a series of senior former-AusAID executives related to me how the creation of an institutional culture of 'going under the radar' was a deliberately cultivated. They knew that if the organisation did something to gain the attention of senior political decisionmakers, there was a risk funding would be cut or the organisation would be dissolved. So the organisation embraced incremental change, understanding it would likely survive so long as political decisionmakers paid it relatively little attention.

The few political actors who were actively involved in aid policy decisionmaking were likewise cognisant of the marginal political status of aid issues¹⁵⁸. For example, one senior political figure who was partly responsible for promoting their party's development policies during a recent election agreed readily agreed with me when I suggested that aid had very low salience and would never figure as an influential election issue. While foreign policy issues do occasionally decide elections, I am not aware of an aid policy issue that has had a considerable influence on an election¹⁵⁹. It is no surprise, therefore, that the aid policy positions are generally less well-developed than the foreign policy positions or political parties in their election manifestos. For example, Robin Davies, a former senior AusAID official now working as an academic, prefaced his analysis on aid policy in the 2013 Australia election with the comment that "aid and development barely figure in federal election campaigns", with party offerings tending to be "skeletal" and "vague" (R. Davies 2013b, 1).

The low public and political interest in aid policy means aid policy decisionmaking proceeds without much scrutiny. Media attention is minimal. The consequence of the low engagement of the public, political parties, political actors and the media is that the bureaucracy and interest groups have the space to take on more importance in decisionmaking (Lundsgaarde 2013, 24)¹⁶⁰. While "political leaders can be expected to make the greatest efforts at minimizing the discretion of their bureaucratic agents on those issues which are at the top of their political agenda" (Oppermann 2010, 15), the opposite is the case for low salience issues. For low salience issues, insiders with specialised knowledge take on greater importance, notably the bureaucracy and the **development constituency**.

¹⁵⁸ The behaviour of politicians also serves to intrinsically reveal the low salience of aid issues. I found a pattern of behaviour among politicians who were appointed to the cabinet-level position of Secretary of State for International Development in the UK Government to be particularly instructive in this regard, especially considering this is the probably the most prominent aid-related political executive position in the world. Clare Short is widely regarded as "probably the best secretary of state for overseas development [Britain] has had" (Sands 2004, 52), and is, according to Morrissey (2002, 23), "the single most important reason that DFID has become the organisation it now is." Yet in her memoirs, Short admitted to being "stunned and angry" when then-Opposition Leader Tony Blair moved her from the Shadow Transport portfolio to Overseas Development in a pre-election cabinet reshuffle (Short 2005, 49). Only after talking the matter over with her staff did Short firmly decide not to resign after realising the move could prove an opportunity. It is also revealing of aid's lack of political clout that the press reported Short's change of role as a demotion. "She must know that politically she is in a cul-de-sac, far removed from the core concerns of a Labour government-in-waiting" reported *The Observer* (Barber 1997). Remarkably, fifteen years after Short was moved from Transport to Development, Justine Greening experienced the same transition. Greening's reaction was similar to Short's. Greening had served as Secretary for Transport in Cameron's Coalition Government before being appointed Secretary for Development in Cameron's 2012 reshuffle. Greening saw the move as a demotion and was reported to have told Cameron she didn't come into politics to "distribute money to people in poor countries" (While Greening and other officials deny she said this, this rumour has persisted). Andrew Mitchell, who Greening replaced as Development Secretary, was passionate about the international development portfolio. Nonetheless, he sought, and was granted, a promotion to Chief Whip.

¹⁵⁹ Gynge and Wesley (2007, 160) find that "the weight of public opinion research conducted on international affairs bears witness to the low relative priority attached to external affairs by the vast majority of the public, other than during significant foreign policy crises".

¹⁶⁰ Key aid policy decisionmaking studies, including Lundsgaarde (2013), Lancaster (2007a) and Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015) have borne this out. See also Otter (2003, 116).

4.4.2 Aid policy is complicated

Aid policy is complicated and requires specialised knowledge. Acquiring specialised knowledge takes time and commitment. “Most politicians spend much time looking over their shoulders to their domestic base,” observes Hill (2003, 56), “and do not wish to ‘waste’ time on cultivating foreign contacts from which there might be little return.” Likewise, politicians rarely wish to waste time on cultivating foreign policy *expertise*. Those relatively rare politicians *do* seek to become experts in international affairs on their own accord, perhaps motivated by personal interest or a moral imperative, immediately face another disincentive to their prospective investment: the “the international environment still presents a long and steep learning-curve for any politicians wishing to feel at home in it” (Hill 2003, 56). In short, the complexity of aid policy forms a ‘barrier to entry’ that represents another disincentive for political actors to invest their scarce time and attention in this issue area. Highlighting three particular dimensions of aid’s complexity reinforces this point.

Understanding Aid Policy Requires Specialised Knowledge

Christopher Hill (2003, 262) highlights how the distinction between mass and elite opinion becomes important if a policy issue “is remote from everyday life and... cannot even be conceptualized without specialized knowledge”. As the earlier discussion on public opinion and aid highlighted, the general public is incapable of accurately conceptualising their state’s aid program and its size. Non-specialists cannot conceptualise how aid programs are built, with funding spread across channels including multilateral development banks, UN agencies, NGOs, country programs and regional programs, and with each channel having a subtly different purpose and demanding considerably different operational and management requirements.

Engaging in aid policy issues, even more than other policy areas, requires becoming familiar with a degree of specialised technical language. As Lundsgaarde (2013, 24) points out, the “low salience [of aid]... gives legislators fewer incentives to invest time specializing in questions related to aid policy”. While political actors readily acquire knowledge on those policy matters of direct import to their constituents, such as health, education and economics, there are few opportunities to acquire specialised aid policy knowledge outside of an aid-related appointment. An example illustrating the potential implications of this involves Stephen Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs in the first Rudd Government. Smith was appointed as Minister for Foreign Affairs with little prior knowledge of the aid program (he had been widely expected to be appointed to the Education portfolio). While acknowledged as a committed and highly competent Minister, Smith quickly became frustrated with the ‘aid-speak’ that littered his briefings. From the point of view of several senior AusAID staff at the time, Stephen Smith and AusAID never developed

an effective working relationship, in part because Smith found the briefings he received impenetrable¹⁶¹.

Aid Policy Encompasses Many Objectives Simultaneously

“Aid policy is puzzling,” explains van der Veen (2011, 2), “because it is not obvious ex ante what the goal of official development assistance ought to be: aid can serve goals from security (e.g. fighting terrorism), to financial gain (promoting exports), to humanitarianism.” For van der Veen (2011, 2), the ability of aid policy to pursue multiple (and often competing) objectives, simultaneously, makes it the the foreign policy version of a Swiss army knife: a multi-purpose tool of foreign policy. This multiplicity of potential purposes and applications distinguishes aid policy as an issue area.

Precisely because “aid programmes can handle whatever policy-makers put their minds to” (van der Veen 2011, 2) it becomes extremely difficult for political actors, or indeed the public, to succinctly answer an apparently simple question: what is aid for?¹⁶² In contrast, the rationale for purchasing a submarine, whose basic purpose is clear, is relatively straightforward for the public to understand. Although the public cannot possibly comprehend the complexity of the hardware itself, there is a base level understanding that the rationale for this investment is that it provides them with security. The ‘what is aid for?’ question is much more difficult to answer when it comes to aid, not only because aid spending is less tangible but because there are multiple, often conflicting, answers to the question.

The multipurpose nature of aid portfolios can prove especially unnerving for political actors, who are generally rewarded for communicating to the public in clear, black and white terms, rather than shades of grey. As one long-term political journalist explained to me, a state’s motivation for spending on aid resists reduction to a bumper sticker slogan¹⁶³. Any effort to do so invariably proves counterproductive: efforts which focus exclusively on highlighting the benefits the donor accrues from providing aid can appear callous and offend the sizeable constituency who believe aid should be provided for purely altruistic reasons, whereas efforts to focus exclusively on the benefits that accrue to the aid recipient risk drawing criticism from those who argue that the state’s resources should prioritise assisting struggling individuals *within* the state.

¹⁶¹ It should be noted that the AusAID executives I spoke with also acknowledged the organisation was somewhat culpable in that they were not able to develop digestible briefings.

¹⁶² Academics, too, continue to grapple with this question, as chapter 2 showed.

¹⁶³ Personal interview with Graeme Dobell, October 2015.

Aid Policy Straddles the Domestic and International Spheres.

The familiar ‘charity begins at home’ argument arises from the fact that aid policy bridges the domestic-international divide in a unique way. Given that “[s]tates are responsible above all for the security and well-being of their own citizens”, asks Lancaster (2007a, 3), “why then would they provide their own scarce public concessional resources to promote, among other things, the well-being of people in other countries?” This question penetrates to the core of why aid policy differs from other issue areas, including other realms of foreign policy. In Western states, aid programmes represent the most significant ongoing transfer of resources provided (at least in part) for the express benefit of the well-being of non-citizens. In doing so, aid policy uniquely straddles the domestic and international spheres, breaking the normal policy feedback loop. While foreign aid constitutes a form of redistributive policy (Lundsgaarde 2013, 22), it is different from other domestic redistributive policies in that the recipients of aid are, by definition, unable to vote. This not only contributes to challenges in evaluating aid spending, it alters the political calculus for the provision of aid.

As Lundsgaarde (2013, 60–61) has argued, “[i]n contrast to the domestic redistributive programs, which provide compensation to voters or interest groups to secure electoral gain... aid directed toward poverty alleviation abroad benefits a diffuse foreign constituency that is unlikely to be able to directly bolster the political fortune of decision-makers in donor countries”¹⁶⁴. Aspiring to be an aid policy decisionmaker offers a politician few direct electoral rewards. Involvement in defence policy, by way of comparison, has greater potential to realise electoral benefits, flowing either from the often significant defence force-related voters in particular electorates, via the awarding of large procurement contracts, or from basing decisions.

The impacts realised by aid spending are indirect and intangible for domestic voters. The ‘results’ of aid are delivered a ‘long way from home’. This reality reinforces the low issue salience of aid. “[P]eople are more likely to pay attention to issues that seem to have a more direct and (geographically or temporally) more proximate impact on their own lives,” explains Zahariadis (2016, 8). “The more direct and close the impact,” Zahariadis (2016, 8) adds, “the greater the attention the issue is likely to receive”.

¹⁶⁴ Lancaster (2007a, 3) makes a similar point, albeit more bluntly: “States are responsible above all for the security and well-being of their own citizens. Why then would they provide their own scarce public concessional resources to promote, among other things, the well-being of people in other countries?”

4.4.3 *There Are No 'Aid Crises'*

Foreign policy matters are attended to by an 'inner executive', typically the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in collaboration with a handful of other trusted advisors (Hill 2003, 56; G. J. Evans and Grant 1991, 45–47)¹⁶⁵. While leaders of political parties generally build their careers by demonstrating competency at managing domestic portfolios, once they become leaders they are obliged to pay attention to foreign policy, regardless of whether they have any interest or previous experience in international matters. Often Prime Ministers and other senior political figures take time to find their feed in the international realm, given the understandable lack of preparation after a political career typically focused on domestic concerns.

The prominence of key executives in foreign policy decisionmaking is exaggerated in crisis situations, which are “invariably... handled at the highest levels of government power, and almost by definition top leaders will be involved *regardless of their general level of interest in foreign affairs*” (V. M. Hudson 2014, 40, emphasis added). When it comes to matters of high politics, a state's leaders have an obligation to engage. Indeed, during foreign policy crises, their attention is often largely devoted to the issue for days at a time. Moreover, the public will often evaluate a leader's performance based on the outcome of such an episode.

In Walker's study on agenda-setting in the U.S. Senate, he distinguishes between required and discretionary agenda items (Walker 1977, 425). Cohen also draws upon this helpful distinction, adding that for U.S. President's, foreign affairs and the economy are required agenda items, whereas all others are discretionary (Cohen 1995, 91). These two issues are likewise required agenda items for heads of government elsewhere. Dealing with foreign affairs and the economy are non-negotiables. They are intrinsically the responsibility of leaders. What I am arguing here, however, is that aid policy is distinguished from foreign policy in that it much more dependent on executive discretion (Corbett 2017, 7). Leaders are not automatically obliged to pay attention to it. Rather, they choose to do so. And as a discretionary item, aid policy competes with other potential choices to reach the political agenda. As Cohen (1995, 91) says, “discretionary areas compete for the remainder of the agenda space”, once *required* agenda items have been addressed.

Graham Allison's groundbreaking study of the Cuban Missile Crisis reconstructed foreign policy decisionmaking processes during thirteen crucial days. My initial inspiration to recreate aid

¹⁶⁵ “Foreign policy processes have... been distinguished from domestic policy processes”, relates Lundsgaarde (2013, 21), “because of the prominence of executives in international statecraft and the deference of other domestic actors to executive dominance in this area”.

policy decisionmaking processes was partly an attempt to replicate *Essence of Decision* (Allison and Zelikow 1999), for aid decisionmaking. Yet it soon became very clear that the decisionmaking processes analysed by Allison were of an entirely different type than aid policy decisionmaking episodes. Quite simply, there is no equivalent to a foreign policy crisis in the aid policy realm. When it comes to aid policy decisionmaking, the viability of the donor state is never in question. Prime Ministers are not woken up in the middle of the night needing to make an urgent decision about whether to recalibrate aid spending. Ultimately, aid policy issues will remain a relatively low priority even for those politicians who are otherwise obliged to pay attention to foreign policy issues.

The fact that aid policy does not invoke crises of the type which demand the focused attention of the inner executive of a government is a key reason why the FPA subdiscipline has largely ignored aid. FPA scholars gravitate to investigating decisionmaking in moments of crisis (Stern 2003). “Crises tend to capture the attention of leaders and scholars alike”, observes Stern (2003, 184)¹⁶⁶. Aid policy decisionmaking does typically unfold in the way that foreign policy crises do and hence does not naturally lend itself to being examined using first image frameworks. The ‘great men of history’ make their reputations by making (or avoiding) war, not in dispensing aid.

It may bring more clarity here if I distinguish between aid *crises* (which I have argued do not exist) and what might be termed aid *scandals* (which do occur occasionally). Aid scandals, if they are serious enough, will certainly ‘get the attention’ of political leaders and may result in the can conceivably precipitate a political crisis where the political future of a government is jeopardised. However, aid scandals are best understood as domestic political issues within donor states which are typically fuelled predominantly by something related to the delivery or management of aid and not aid policy itself. In other words, the core driver of aid scandals is most likely to be issues such as corruption, broken promises, mismanagement or political infighting (as we will see in the examples of minor aid scandals discussed in chapter 5 at subsection 5.4.2). This is not to say such scandals cannot have impact on aid policy. Rather, the point is that aid is not an instrument of foreign policy that is immediately reached for when a

¹⁶⁶ Numerous accounts exist, for example, of how the personality of leaders influence a states’ decision to go to war (for example, Bluth 2004; Renshon 2005; Dyson 2006; D. Mitchell and Massoud 2009). Likewise, studies of small group dynamics focus on similar topics with Janis’ (1972) *Victims of Groupthink* the quintessential example. This landmark book, which introduced the concept of Groupthink, featured a psychological study of the decisionmaking process which led to President Kennedy authorising the Bay of Pigs invasion, amongst a number of similar cases of foreign policy ‘fiascoes’ relating to: the decision to escalate the Korean War; the lack of US vigilance regarding Pearl Harbour; and the escalation of the Vietnam War. Such moments of crisis have typically provided the preferred empirical fodder for FPA scholars.

national security crisis emerges. This means aid is inevitably a discretionary agenda item for a state leader, rather than a required agenda item.

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4.5 Conclusion

One of the epigraphs commencing this chapter highlighted Charles Hermann's (1990, 20) call for more to be done "to characterize the conditions that can produce decisions for dramatic redirection in foreign policy." The theory of aid policy change presented in this chapter represents a contribution to this objective. The explanatory mechanisms of decider salience and aid salience shocks convey how dramatic redirections in aid policy result from a sustained increase in the attention powerful political actors pay to aid issues. In this sense, the theory is actor-centric: the agency of powerful political actors primarily determines how aid issues reach and stay on the political agenda, activities which create the potential for change. But at the same time, the explanatory mechanisms allow for the active incorporation of domestic and international factors, in the development of an explanation for aid policy change.

To this point, I have conveyed the theory of aid policy change in largely theoretical terms. Having now reached the end of Part I, the thesis moves from having a theoretical focus to an empirical one. Having made the theoretical case for my theory of aid policy change, I now transition to demonstrate the theory's plausibility empirically. The mechanisms of decider salience and aid salience shocks were constructed to bring order and simplicity to vast amounts of empirical material. They emerged out of an effort to make sense of the agenda dynamics evident during examples aid policy change. Most importantly for the objectives of this thesis, however, is that these explanatory mechanisms function as devices around which to tell the three stories of aid policy change presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7.

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PART II

5 Explaining Aid Policy Change in Australia

In the early 2000s, Australia's spending on aid suddenly departed from its long-term trajectory. For thirty years, Australia's ODA contributions had grown steadily but unremarkably, increasing by an average of just 1% per annum over this period. Yet beginning in 2003-04, Australia's aid program dramatically expanded, with aid spending increasing by an average of 7% a year over the next decade. During this period, Australia's ODA increased by more than 80% in real terms, from \$3 billion in 2003-04 to \$5.5 billion in 2012-13¹⁶⁷.

This remarkable expansion of Australia's aid budget was underpinned by a bipartisan commitment to expand Australia's ODA to 0.5% of GNI by 2015-16, a commitment dubbed the 'golden consensus' by long-term Canberra Press Gallery journalist Graeme Dobell (2010b). The golden consensus collapsed before the 0.5% target was achieved, however, with aid spending ultimately peaking at 0.34% of GNI in 2012-13. At this point, rather than recalibrating to rise at a more sustainable rate, plateauing, or even gently receding, Australia's aid spending trajectory dived even more rapidly than it had ascended. By 2015-16—the very year of the 0.5% target was to be achieved, and only three years after the aid budget reached its historical peak—aid spending was back in line with where it was had the Golden Consensus expansion never happened (Howes 2015a).

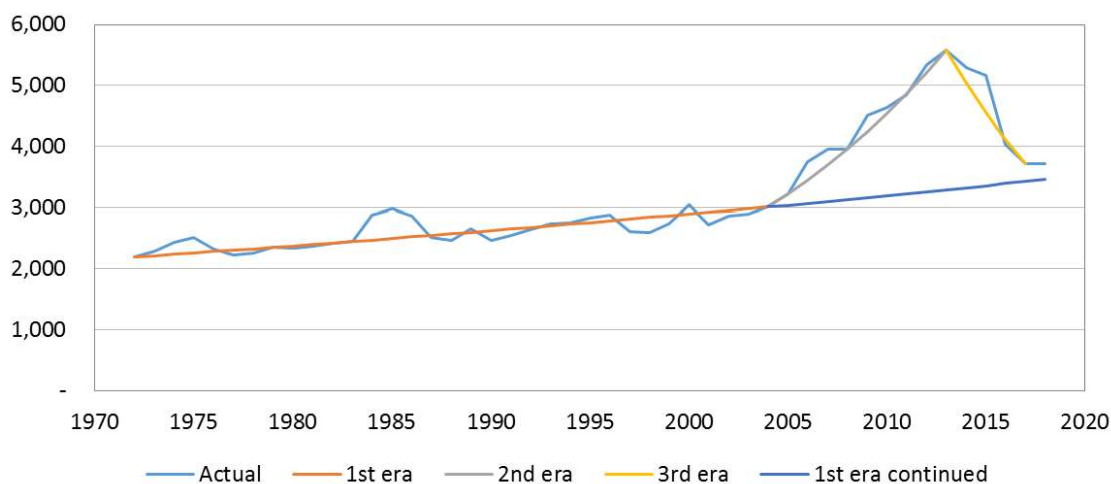
This chapter explains the rise and retreat of aid spending in Australia, with the objective of making sense of the prominent bulge in aid spending shown in Figure 5.A below. What triggered Australia's aid spending ramp up? How was such a rapid expansion sustained for a decade? What caused the golden consensus to break down? And why was the dramatic aid expansion so rapidly reversed? These are the questions to which this chapter responds.

The story this chapter tells unfolds in four 'acts'. The first two sections document the influence of the Rudd aid salience shock in bending the path of Australia's aid spending upwards from its historical trajectory. I show how Kevin Rudd's repeated interventions into aid policy

¹⁶⁷ All figures quoted in this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, are in 2016-17 Australian Dollars.

decisionmaking were decisive in driving Australia's aid expansion over a long period. In February 2012, however, this impetus was rapidly withdrawn when Rudd resigned as Foreign Minister. The findings presented over the first two sections of this chapter, in particular, dovetail with those published in Jack Corbett's recently published history of AusAID (Corbett 2017, chapter 5). Indeed, Corbett and I interviewed many of the same people at around the same time and he also concludes that "Rudd's support for the aid program [was] the key to its growth, increase status and autonomy between 2007 and 2013" (Corbett 2017, 113). Nonetheless, Corbett's account examines structural changes that occurred under the Rudd and Abbott governments (most notably the decision to abolish AusAID), while my account focuses on spending changes. In summary, of the 'four S's' of strategy-level aid policy decisionmaking outlined in chapter 1, Corbett considers structure, while I consider size¹⁶⁸.

Figure 5.A: Australian Aid Spending, 1970-2017 (\$m, 2015-16 prices)¹⁶⁹



Following my explanation of the dramatic aid expansion under Rudd (the 2nd era in Figure 5.A above), section three addresses why Australia's spending trajectory made a u-turn after 2012-13. Here I explain how the rapid reversal of Australia's aid spending, more than merely being a result of the removal of the Rudd aid salience shock, is explained by the concurrent emergence of a countervailing 'budget deficit' aid salience shock. This salience shock exerted strong downward pressure on aid spending and was responsible for the series of cuts to aid made during the last half of the Gillard Government and the Abbott Government. Yet the 'budget deficit' aid salience shock alone, I argue in section four, cannot account for the extent and rapidity of Australia's aid spending reversal. The Liberal Party Factionalism salience shock takes

¹⁶⁸ Recently, a suite of articles have assessed change in Australia's aid program from different perspectives (Day 2016; Rosser 2016; Corbett and Dinnen 2016). Even more recently, Wood, Burkot and Howes (2017) compare the approaches taken in these articles. Corbett's recent book and this thesis represent longer extensions to this nascent literature seeking to understand the reasons behind Australia's recent aid policy changes.

¹⁶⁹ This figure is reproduced from Howes (2015a). Used with permission. See also Howes (2015c, 2015b).

effect once the Abbott Government comes to power and also exerts downward pressure on aid spending. It is the reinforcing effect of these two salience shocks lead to the rapid reduction in aid spending over the two years of the Abbott Government.

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5.1 Creating the Aid Expansion: The Rudd Aid Salience Shock

[O]nce I've got a sense of mission that I'm doing the right thing for the right reasons, I don't pull back.

—Kevin Rudd¹⁷⁰

It was a personal project that he had.

—James Batley

Kevin Rudd was consumed with the mission of increasing aid spending to 0.5%. “It was a personal project that he had” offers James Batley, who was a Deputy Director-General at AusAID when Rudd was Foreign Minister¹⁷¹. “You could see it,” recalls Batley, referring to Rudd’s passion for aid. “He used to do these town hall meetings around Australia and talk about aid.”

In this opening section of the Chapter, I argue that the Rudd aid salience shock provided the crucial impetus for the dramatic expansion of Australia’s aid spending. This salience shock represents the archetypal direct (type I) salience shock: for a decade, while occupying a series of senior political positions (see Table 5.A below), Rudd consistently and deliberately inserted himself into aid policy decisionmaking, driven by his personal belief that aid spending should increase to 0.5%. This section documents the ways in which Rudd personally supplied the initiative and ongoing momentum for aid policy change, focussing on the period up to and including the period of his first Prime Ministership (i.e. to mid-2010). In this section, I describing how Rudd took it on himself to act as chief aid advocate and aid’s political protector. Before

¹⁷⁰ Rudd, quoted in Jackman (2008, 26)

¹⁷¹ Personal Interview with James Batley, January 2016.

elaborating on how Rudd's exercised his influence in undertaking these roles, however, it is important to understand why Rudd was motivated to do so.

Table 5.A: Timeline of Kevin Rudd's Political Career

TimeFrame	Event / Role
October 1998	Elected a Member of Parliament
November 2001– December 2006	Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs
December 2006 – December 2007	Opposition Leader
December 2007 – June 2010	Prime Minister
June 2010 – September 2010	Member of Parliament
September 2010 – February 2012	Minister for Foreign Affairs
22 February 2012	Resigns as Foreign Minister
February 2012 – June 2013	Backbench Member of Parliament
June 2013 – September 2013	Prime Minister
7 September 2013	Defeated in the 2013 Australian federal election by Tony Abbott
22 November 2013	Resigns from Parliament

5.1.1 Rudd as 'Aid Believer'

The basis for Kevin Rudd's sustained political action on aid was a genuine personal commitment to reducing poverty. This commitment was in turn derived from his Christian beliefs, which Rudd publicised surprisingly readily¹⁷². Allan Gyngell (2008, 5–6) has noted how Rudd's "willingness to speak about the impact of his religious beliefs on his political views..." is something that is "uncommon in Australian political life." Prior to Rudd, the last "keen believer", to lead a Labor Government was James Scullin, who became Prime Minister on the eve of the Great Depression in 1929 (D. Marr 2010, 56).

Rudd has acknowledged how his "Christianity... shapes, as a belief system, my beliefs about the proper role which I play as an individual in society and the views which I hold about the proper allocation of the resources of society..." (Maddox 2001, 135). Rudd was especially candid about how his Christian beliefs underpinned his commitment to increasing aid spending (Gyngell 2008, 6). For Rudd's biographer David Marr (2010, 60), "Christ's teaching on poverty is where [Rudd's] politics and religion merge most comfortably". In an influential essay in *The Monthly*, penned just months before becoming Opposition Leader, Rudd (2006) drew on the example of Dietrich Bonhoeffer to determine "the proper relationship between Christianity and politics in the

¹⁷² For extended discussions on Rudd's Christianity and his politics see Marr (2010, 56–67), Macklin (2008, Chapter 17), Maddox (2001, 127, 135) and Warhurst (2008).

modern world". On the basis that a core principle of Christian engagement is to "always take the side of the marginalised, the vulnerable and the oppressed", a commitment to addressing global poverty was a crucial part of Rudd's vision for Australia's future. Rudd called out the "gaping silence in the national debate" in Australia on global poverty and imagined an Australia "that takes the lead on the Millennium Development Goals both in word and deed, and leads by example in dealing with the chronic poverty in our own region" (Rudd 2006).

Rudd's convictions on aid remained consistent. Almost four years after *The Monthly* essay, Rudd appeared at the Micah Challenge 'Voices for Justice' event. Now Prime Minister, he explained how his Christian beliefs underpinned his commitment to increasing aid spending to 0.5% of GNI (Rudd 2010a). The biblically-infused language and highly personal style of Rudd's address was particularly conspicuous on this occasion because of how it compared to the conventional and far less passionate speech delivered at the same event by then-Opposition Leader Tony Abbott, who while well-known for his devout Catholicism, maintains a very different view of the role of faith in public life than Rudd¹⁷³. Although Abbott affirmed the Coalition supported the 0.5% target at this event, a delegate in attendance recalled years later how pained and conflicted Abbott appeared in doing so¹⁷⁴.

There is no doubt that Rudd carefully cultivated the way he presented his personal beliefs in order to maximise his political advantage and to distinguish himself from his political opponents¹⁷⁵. While unconventional, the manner in which Rudd related his faith publicly eventually became a political asset. According to Marr (2010, 58), the way Rudd "spoke and wrote about his faith" was effective in defining his "as a new kind of politician: soft-hearted, hard-headed, courageous, visionary, even pure." As the 2007 Federal election approached, Rudd's embrace of the themes of compassion, fairness and decency allowed him to "straddle a vast political divide" and appeal to left-wing Greens voters and conservative evangelical Christians (D. Marr 2010, 52). Yet to acknowledge that Rudd's faith was leveraged for political advantage does not imply that that Rudd's beliefs were not genuine. Rudd did not Rudd embrace Christianity and aid to extract political benefit. Rather, he sought to extract political benefit from

¹⁷³ In a monograph published in 2001 Marion Maddox contrasts the religious motivations of Abbott and Rudd. Tony Abbott told Maddox that he had "never made a political decision on religious grounds. And I wouldn't" (Maddox 2001, 133–34), while Rudd readily acknowledged that his religious convictions influence his politics (Maddox 2001, 135).

¹⁷⁴ This assessment obtains additional credence in light of the transcript of this speech—along with the transcript of an interview in which Abbott voiced unequivocal support for the 0.5% target (C. Kenny 2013)—being removed from Abbott's website and the Liberal Party website soon after Abbott became Prime Minister (B. Hall 2013).

¹⁷⁵ David Marr (2010, 56) has documented how "[a]fter Labor's defeat in October 2004, Rudd took command of an operation to win believers back to the party". See also Maddox (2001, 143) and an interview Rudd gave on the TV Show *Compass* in 2005 ('Kevin Rudd: The God Factor' 2005).

his embrace of Christianity and aid. The distinction is crucial and is supported by three strands of evidence.

First, and most convincing, is the consistent testimony of individuals who engaged with Rudd directly on aid attesting that Rudd's commitment was deep and genuine¹⁷⁶. Andrew Johnson, a government relations official with World Vision Australia (one of Australia's largest NGOs), told me he didn't know of "any senior person in government who has even approaching [Rudd's] deep moral commitment to aid"¹⁷⁷. James Batley considered Rudd to be "personally invested" in aid¹⁷⁸, a view that was widely shared among high-level former AusAID officials I spoke to who were active during this time. Bob McMullan, who served as Parliamentary Secretary for International Development in Rudd's Government, recalled Rudd being "very passionate about" aid, adding that "he remains passionate about it."

Second, the political benefits that may have potentially accrued to Rudd from an 'expedient' embrace of Christianity and aid, were simply not sufficient enough to warrant such an exercise. Rudd's active publicising of his Christianity was risky. As Rudd's biographer Robert Macklin (2008, 148) observes, "[i]n his assertion of the political implications of his religious faith, Rudd is moving in a different direction from most national and international trends." Rudd himself acknowledged that there were "heaps of risks" associated with bringing religion into the political debate, not least that "in the caucus they'll think that you're some slightly besotted God botherer" ('Kevin Rudd: The God Factor' 2005). There was also the chance that Labor's secular voters would feel alienated" ('Kevin Rudd: The God Factor' 2005). While many of Rudd's Labor colleagues were uneasy about how forthright Rudd was in touting his beliefs, they were ultimately willing to tolerate his religious convictions so long as he appeared capable of leading Labor out "from the political wilderness" (Macklin 2008, 148).

A third strand of evidence suggesting that Rudd's commitment to aid was genuine, and stemmed from deeply held personal beliefs, relates to the consistency and doggedness with which Rudd pursued the objective of expanding the aid program. Rudd's commitment to expanding the aid program did not waver at any stage of his political career. Furthermore, since ending his political career, Rudd has maintained his strong interest in aid and development, most notably through his role as President of the Asia Society Policy Institute¹⁷⁹. The consistency and extent of Rudd's

¹⁷⁶ The examples provided in this paragraph are representative and by no means an exhaustive. Furthermore, these claims are consistent with existing biographies of Rudd (Macklin 2008; D. Marr 2010; N. Stuart 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Personal interview with Andrew Johnson, November 2015.

¹⁷⁸ Personal interview with James Batley, January 2016.

¹⁷⁹ I acknowledge that Rudd's role at the Asia Society is widely seen as providing a front for Rudd's campaign to become UN Secretary General.

tangible *actions*, undertaken over a long period of time, most clearly point to the depth of his beliefs and their lasting power to motivate. It is towards documenting these tangible actions to which I now turn my attention.

5.1.2 *Rudd as Aid Advocate*

An important way in which Rudd's personal commitment to aid was practically translated into policy action was through his role as an aid advocate. Rudd was the driving force behind the creation of the 0.5% target. This intervention was critical because, from the start, the 0.5% target framed the decade-long expansion in Australia. When Shadow Foreign Minister, Rudd personally sought out Bob McMullan, a Labor Party strategist, former Cabinet Minister, and development enthusiast, in order to collaborate on aid policy. "It was Rudd's initiative," McMullan told me, when recalling the collaboration between the pair which birthed the 0.5% target¹⁸⁰. According to McMullan, the step of agreeing on a policy to reach 0.5% by 2013 "was the key decision." From this point, recalled McMullan, "most of the other aid policy elements of the period from the early days of opposition to 2010 were driven by the 0.5." (Given how low Australia's aid spending was at the time, McMullan and Rudd reasoned that reaching 0.7% was unachievable "unless we set a time period well outside the realms of credibility." 0.5%, on the other hand, although a stretch, "was realistic"). Once decided on the aid target, Rudd used his authority to get the Opposition Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) to 'lock in' the spending requirements into their costings.

In an address to the Lowy Institute for International Policy in Sydney on 5 July 2007, Rudd publicly committed a future Labor government to "raising our ODA to GNI contribution from 0.35 per cent in 2010-2011 to 0.5 per cent by 2015-16" (Rudd 2007a; see also Dobell 2010c). This commitment was significant because it literally 'doubled down' on an earlier commitment by Prime Minister John Howard to expand the aid program to \$4 billion by 2010¹⁸¹. John Howard receives surprisingly little credit for his role in initiating the expansion of Australia's aid spending in the mid-2000s¹⁸². Nonetheless, without Rudd, the sustained shift in Australia's aid spending

¹⁸⁰ Personal interview with Bob McMullan, March 2016. McMullan mentioned his aid policy discussions with Rudd in an appearance on ABC Radio's Sunday Profile ('Bob McMullan MP' 2010), while Rudd also publicly noted McMullan's input in his speech launching the Review (Rudd 2011c).

¹⁸¹ At the United Nations World Summit in New York in September 2005, Howard announced that the Australian Government would double the aid budget by 2010 (AusAID 2006, ix). The following April, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer launched a White Paper—titled *Australian Aid: Promoting Growth and Stability*—to provide a long-term "strategic framework" for the planned expansion of the aid program to around \$4 billion by the end of the decade (AusAID 2006).

¹⁸² In the 2005-06 and 2006-07 financial years, Australia's ODA budget increased by 16.1% and 5.8% respectively, in real terms. The 2005-06 increase was the 2nd largest annual increase (in percentage terms), in this history of the aid program.

trajectory was unlikely to have stuck. Rudd's advocacy provided the ongoing fuel to stoke a fire that Howard may have helped light, but had little intention of flaming. This became clear during the 2007 federal election campaign, when Howard refused to match Labor's commitment to 0.5%, despite ongoing goading from Rudd and others (Doherty 2007).

Rudd's promise set Australia on a trajectory to have an \$8 billion aid program by 2015. In an effort to distinguish the Opposition's policy from that of the Howard Government, Rudd also linked the 0.5% target with Australia's commitment to achieving the MDGs (something Howard had conspicuously avoided) and obligation to do "its fair share of the work" to "make poverty history" (Rudd 2007a). Rudd's close identification with the Make Poverty History campaign is an important aspect of his advocacy. Rudd timed the 0.5% announcement to coincide with the Make Poverty History Zero Seven Roadtrip, a week-long national youth campaign involving 700 volunteers designed to raise awareness of the MDGs at the midway-point of achieving those goals (Zero Seven 2007). Rudd spoke at the culmination of the campaign—a concert at the Sydney Opera House on Friday 6 July—where he reiterated his 0.5% target announced in his speech at the Lowy Institute the day beforehand. During this period, Rudd formed close connections with many of the organisations involved in Make Poverty History, for example the Oaktree Foundation, a youth-led anti-poverty movement and Micah Challenge. Rudd's close association with the Make Poverty History campaign helped established Rudd's pro-aid profile, kick-starting the 'Ruddification' of the 0.5% target and also offering a point of difference with Howard as the 2007 federal election campaign approached.

Despite aid issues receiving an unusually high level of attention during the 2007 federal election campaign (Wade 2007), their impact on the political agenda nonetheless remained peripheral. The fact that Rudd's campaign launch speech (Rudd 2007b)—which in fact take place towards the end of the campaign once undecided voters are engaged—did not mention aid is reflective of aid's enduring low salience, even in the 2007 climate. To the extent that aid issues influenced the election result at all, Rudd's strong support of aid could be seen to have 'fed into' Rudd's narrative that Howard had become "stuck in the past" and no longer understood "the new challenges that we face in the future" (Rudd 2007b). There is also evidence that Rudd's embrace of aid may have contributed to voters views that Rudd was more compassionate than Howard (McAllister 2011, 254) and that he provided inspiring leadership (McAllister 2011, 256). The decisive issue for the public in the election was, as usual, economic management (Wanna 2015).

Rudd's aid advocacy role took on a different complexion after becoming Prime Minister, and later as Foreign Minister, as more opportunities arose on the international stage. A striking

example of Rudd's consistent high-level political commitment to the 0.5% target was demonstrated each September between 2008 and 2011. Over four consecutive years Rudd—twice while Prime Minister and twice as Foreign Minister—promised the United Nations General Assembly that Australia would double its aid and reach 0.5% by 2015 (Rudd 2008, 2009, 2010b, 2011e). In a typical extract from Rudd's 2011 speech, Rudd boasted that Australia had: “doubled our development assistance over the last 5 years. And are on track to double it again by 2015. Based on available data, that would make Australia's ODA budget approximately the 6th largest in the world” (Rudd 2011e).

5.1.3 Rudd as Aid's Political Protector

The influence Rudd exercised behind the scenes in order to repeatedly protect the aid budget was less visible, but arguably more important, than his role as aid advocate in sustaining Australia's aid expansion. I have already mentioned how, upon becoming Opposition Leader, Rudd was instrumental in ensuring Labor adopted the 0.5% target as Party strategy, using his influence get the Opposition Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) to ‘lock in’ the spending implications of the 0.5% policy.

Once Rudd became Prime Minister, he enjoyed a greater degree of power and autonomy, even by the standards of that office. There were a number of reasons for this. First, Rudd accumulated substantial goodwill within the Labor Party with his victory in the 2007 Federal election, which returned Labor to Government after four consecutive federal election losses. Second, stratospheric public approval ratings—a Nielsen poll taken in mid-May 2008 had Rudd as preferred Prime Minister over Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson at 70% to 17% (Australian Associated Press 2010)—reinforced Rudd's authority early in his Prime Ministership. Third, an inner circle of key ministers sitting as the Strategic Priorities and Budget Committee (a grouping which became known as the ‘gang of four’)¹⁸³ gradually usurped cabinet as the central decisionmaking organ of the Rudd government, particularly following the onset of the Global Financial Crisis in late 2008. While the increasing concentration of power in his office ultimately contributed to Rudd's downfall, it also meant that, as Prime Minister, Rudd exercised singular influence over Government policy.

Rudd's desire to see aid spending increased was duly reflected in the May 2008 budget, the Rudd Government's first. The nominal increase of \$622 million achieved during 2008-09 ranks as the

¹⁸³ The ‘gang of four’ comprised Rudd, Treasurer Wayne Swan, Deputy Prime Minister Gillard and Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner. See Marr (2010, 68–69) and Rayner and Wanna (2015, 19).

largest single-year increase in the history of the Australian aid program¹⁸⁴. The foreword to the ‘Blue Book’—the traditional Ministerial Statement on aid accompanying the budget documents—explained how the budget laid “the foundation for implementing the Government’s election commitment to increase Australia’s official development assistance (ODA) to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015-16” (Stephen Smith and McMullan 2008, iii). In a tangible demonstration of the influence of the 0.5% target in framing aid policy, the 2008 budget papers projected ODA levels for the current year and next three years (i.e. the period of the forward estimates): 0.32 per cent in 2008-09; 0.35 in 2009-10; 0.37 in 2010-11; and 0.38 in 2011-12 (Stephen Smith and McMullan 2008, iii). That the large increases in aid spending were achieved despite Rudd’s Foreign Minister, Stephen Smith, preferring to see the aid program stay “as flat... and as below the radar as possible” (in the words of a senior government official), indicates the degree of Rudd’s influence.

The onset of the GFC in late 2008 immediately compromised the achievement of the stepped targets laid out in the 2008 budget as the Government shifted spending priorities to stimulating the domestic economy (Rayner and Wanna 2015, 18). To save money in both the 2009 and 2010 budgets, the aid spending trajectory was back-ended by pushing expenditure closer to 2015, implying a steeper trajectory for reaching 0.5% of GNI. Nonetheless, aid spending still increased by 2.7% and 4.6% (in real terms) respectively during these years. Without Rudd’s advocacy, it is difficult to imagine that aid spending would have expanded by even these relatively modest amounts, given the environment of dramatically increased fiscal pressure in the immediate aftermath of the GFC.

Rudd’s embrace of aid while he was Prime Minister was tolerated in Cabinet rather than supported. Apart from Rudd, there were no aid champions in Cabinet¹⁸⁵. Richard Moore, who served as a Deputy Director-General in AusAID during Rudd’s Prime Ministership, recalled McMullan telling him that “every Prime Minister is allowed their indulgence. This [i.e. the 0.5% target] is seen as Kevin’s”¹⁸⁶. Rudd himself appeared to be aware of the thin level of support amongst his senior colleagues. Just two days before Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced she would challenge him for the Labor leadership, Rudd warned a Micah Challenge Voices for Justice event that “[e]very Finance Minister and every Treasurer of the country will rail against this [0.5% target]” (Rudd 2010a).

¹⁸⁴ The nominal increase of \$622 million achieved during 2008-09 ranks as the largest nominal single-year increase in the history of the Australian aid program (with the 14% real increase equating to the third largest percentage increase in history).

¹⁸⁵ Bob McMullan, as a Parliamentary Secretary, was not a member of cabinet.

¹⁸⁶ When I asked McMullan whether this quote attributed to him was accurate, he confirmed it was.

Rudd resigned as Prime Minister on 24 June once it became apparent that he would lose the looming leadership ballot instigated by Gillard. The shockwaves from this seminal event continue to disturb Australia's political culture, and instantly created irredeemable fissures in Rudd and Gillard's political careers and the respective Government's they subsequently led. In the aftermath of his resignation, it was widely assumed Rudd's political career—and, by extension, his influence over aid policy—was over. Yet an unusual sequence of events led to a situation where, surprisingly, Rudd enjoyed more direct influence over Australia's aid policy, at least temporarily.

§§§

5.2 Securing the Aid Expansion: Rudd's Independent Review

I am the Australian government—when it comes to AusAID

—Kevin Rudd

Rudd was sworn in as Foreign Minister on 14 September 2010. Later that day, he addressed staff at AusAID. The very next day Rudd jetted to Pakistan, which was experiencing calamitous flooding (Massola and Kelly 2010; Stewart 2010). While in Pakistan, the new Foreign Minister was asked by reporters about the prospects of additional Australian assistance, to which Rudd responded, “[w]ell, we'll see because I am the Australian government—when it comes to AusAID” (AAP 2010). A striking number of interviewees pointed me to this moment, convinced it was deeply revealing of Rudd's attitude. Rudd considered the aid program *his* program. Now, as Foreign Minister, Rudd's interest in aid and his direct responsibilities aligned. The Rudd aid salience shock intensified during this period, as Rudd proved repeatedly willing and able to inject himself into decisionmaking in order to ensure the ongoing health and viability of his 0.5% project.

5.2.1 Revitalising the 0.5% Project

Rudd announced the establishment of an Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness (the Independent Review) soon after his trip to Pakistan (Rudd 2010c). The Independent Review represented only the fourth major review of Australia's aid program in its history¹⁸⁷ and each of the previous reviews had been "pivotal in setting a clear direction and rationale for the program well into the future" (O'Keeffe 2010b). Why did Rudd initiate the Independent Review? The short answer is this: to embed the planned aid expansion more securely. For Rudd, the 0.5% target was the lodestar for the aid program. He was heavily personally and politically invested in the target. Accordingly, he strongly resisted any potential departure from the expansionary policy trajectory he had initiated and fostered. Ahead of initiating the Independent Review, despite the apparent robustness of 'Golden Consensus' during the 2010 election campaign, Rudd would have been keenly attuned to the need to counter two emerging threats that had the potential to jeopardise his 0.5% project. The Independent Review was initiated, in part, to respond to these concerns.

The first concern was process-related and concerned the absence of an over-arching government policy to guide the aid expansion. Labor did not produce its own substantial policy blueprint to guide this process during its first term in Government, something which became a source of consternation amongst senior AusAID staff during this period. Only a month prior to Rudd's announcement of the formation of the Review, Annmaree O'Keeffe, who had recently departed from her role as a Deputy Director-General at AusAID for a role with the Lowy Institute, published an op-ed in *The Australian* warning about the "huge" administration challenges of the rapid expansion and lamented "the absence of a comprehensive aid policy" to direct this task (O'Keeffe 2010a).

The second threat was much more pervasive. It related to a lingering unease within the bureaucracy about the sustainability of AusAID's rapid growth trajectory, both in terms of funding and staff. AusAID's rapid spending growth from the mid-2000s, along with further projected expansion led the Auditor General to conduct an audit of AusAID in 2009. While the audit found AusAID had managed the aid program effectively, it concluded that the organisation faced "considerable management challenges amidst ongoing program growth" (Australian National Audit Office 2009, 16). The incoming government briefing the Treasury prepared ahead

¹⁸⁷ The Independent Review (Hollway et al. 2011) follows in the tradition of the 'The Jackson Report' (Jackson and Committee to Review the Australian Overseas Aid Program 1984), 'The Simons Report' (Simons, Hart, and Walsh 1997) and the 2006 White Paper (AusAID 2006). The White Paper's position in this lineage is disputed, as it was not technically an 'independent review'. It was dismissed by Labor on this basis.

of the 2010 election for the Labour Government (the ‘red book’) warned that “the increase in the ODA budget, if not handled well, will result in less effective delivery and public criticism of the aid program” (Department of Treasury 2010, 11). The Department of Finance and Deregulation’s briefing (2010b) issued a similar warning¹⁸⁸.

The staffing increases AusAID was absorbing during this period were even more dramatic than the spending increases. In the seven years between 2005 and 2012, AusAID expanded by an average of a division a year—a remarkable rate considering the agency had consisted of just two divisions until the mid-1980s¹⁸⁹ and then just three until 2005. The expansion of AusAID was especially rapid when contrasted with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, an agency known to be chronically underfunded (see Table 5.B below)¹⁹⁰. Moreover, the rapid growth of AusAID attracted staff “in search of opportunity and promotions”, including many from DFAT (Day 2016, 645). DFAT’s relative neglect reinforced a growing notion in Canberra that AusAID’s growth was unbalanced. This exacerbated tensions between AusAID and its ‘parent’ agency, with implications when AusAID was later absorbed into DFAT (Dobell 2015a, 2015b).

Table 5.B: Comparing DFAT and AusAID Staffing Increases, 2007-2013

	DFAT			AusAID		
	Staff Levels 30 June '07	Staff Levels 30 June '13	% Increase	Staff Levels 30 June '07	Staff Levels 30 June '13	% Increase
Australia-based Staff	1617	1858	15	515	1458	183
Overseas-based Staff	2039	2422	19	68	869	1178
TOTAL STAFF	3656	4820	17	583	2327	298
<i>of which SES¹⁹¹</i>	204	215	5	21	69	229

Perhaps most damaging for the prospects of the aid expansion was the scepticism of AusAID’s senior staff at the time about the sustainability of the ramp up. Andrew Johnson, team leader of government relations for World Vision Australia, a leading NGO, remembers that, “you could never find anyone in AusAID who thought they could spend the scale up.” When I canvassed this

¹⁸⁸ It is worth noting that this warning was redacted in the initial version of the Department of Finance and Deregulation’s briefing (2010a) released under Freedom of Information laws. The redaction was removed in a later, updated version (2010b) issued by the Department.

¹⁸⁹ The Jackson Review tentatively suggested expanding AusAID (or ADAB, as it was then) from two to three divisions.

¹⁹⁰ A pair of reports published by the Lowy Institute in 2009 and 2011 succeeded in shining a spotlight on Australia’s ‘diplomatic deficit’, which had grown out of long-term underinvestment in diplomacy, and especially in consular representation (Gyngell et al. 2009; Oliver and Shearer 2011). A Parliamentary Inquiry into Australia’s overseas representation was initiated in 2012 (Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade 2012). See also Dobell (2010a).

¹⁹¹ SES staff are the ‘Senior Executive Service’ of the Australian Public Service, the most senior bureaucrats.

with senior AusAID staff from the time, I was taken aback by their admissions of an almost complete lack of belief in the feasibility of the Rudd scale up. Consider these reflections:

*"I regard [the Rudd doubling] as madness, the timeframe. It was ill-considered but, you know, when you're handed that, you get on and you go for it"*¹⁹².

*"Nobody sitting inside AusAID thought that we would [achieve the planned expansion]... we thought we were building for something that would never happen. And every year it was postponed and every year it became harder..."*¹⁹³.

*"I don't know if anyone believed in the sustainability of the ramp up"*¹⁹⁴.

By 2010, voices in the media were telegraphing the lack of confidence amongst Canberra's mandarins to the public¹⁹⁵. For example, in February 2011 Greg Sheridan (2011a) argued in his column in *The Australian* that the "aid budget is expanding beyond our ability to spend it properly. It has acquired a wholly fraudulent sacred cow status that puts it beyond sensible scrutiny".

The Independent Review, and the new government aid policy that emerged from it, were designed to respond to the above concerns by reframing the rationale for ongoing aid spending increases and generating confidence that the planned spending increases were sustainable¹⁹⁶. However, multiple informants I spoke with contend that another important dynamic was also operating. Rudd's decision to abandon his emissions trading scheme (ETS) in April 2010, after presenting it as Australia's greatest moral and economic challenge, triggered a "loss of face" that was the proximate cause of spiralling approval ratings and his downfall as Prime Minister (Megalogenis 2010, 4)¹⁹⁷. Rudd, who harboured ambitions to return to the Prime Ministership, could not afford to break another high-profile promise. Rudd's personal and political credibility was now so closely linked to the 0.5% target that he could not countenance any alteration to the scale of the aid expansion he had set in place.

5.2.2 Rudd as Aid Policymaker

A feature of Rudd's time as Foreign Minister was the extent of his engagement in the aid policymaking process. The manner of his engagement, however, was distinctly different during each of the two major phases of the decisionmaking episode that began with the establishment

¹⁹² Personal interview with Richard Moore, January 2016.

¹⁹³ Personal interview with a senior official.

¹⁹⁴ Personal interview with a senior official.

¹⁹⁵ For example, Shearer (2010).

¹⁹⁶ Rudd (2012) acknowledged in a speech delivered in March 2012 that the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness "reframed our aid strategy".

¹⁹⁷ For an overview of the dynamics of Rudd's backdown on climate change, see McDonald (2012, 2013a).

of an Independent Review and resulted in a new Australian aid policy—*An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference-Delivering real result* (AusAID 2012). During the five months the five-member Review Team was conducting the Independent Review, Rudd's direct involvement was limited. He exercised his influence during this phase by adeptly framing the parameters of the Independent Review. Once the Review Panel's report had been handed down, however, Rudd engaged in the policy process in an entirely different way, becoming extraordinarily practically involved in developing the Government response.

In the first part of this section of the chapter, I highlighted the reasons why Rudd's 0.5% project required strategic reinforcement. Here I explain how Rudd delivered this reinforcement. My contention is that Rudd's framing of the Independent Review process curtailed any serious examination of an alternative to the ongoing expansion of Australia's aid policy in accordance with the 0.5% target (c.f. Janis and Mann 1977, Chapter 11)¹⁹⁸. The single most persuasive piece of evidence I uncovered to support this claim concerns a letter Prime Minister Gillard sent to Rudd. Eight days prior to formally announcing the Independent Review, Rudd formally wrote Gillard seeking agreement to conduct an 'Aid Effectiveness Study'. Gillard responded in a letter dated 12 November¹⁹⁹. This correspondence included the following critical passage: "I note that the Government's overall funding for ODA is set by the commitment to increase the aid budget to 0.5% of GNI by 2015-16 and is *outside the scope of the Study* (emphasis added)."

While the language in the Independent Review's terms of reference was not this blunt, a close reading likewise suggests the Review Team's scope of enquiry was circumscribed. The terms of reference indicate that the Review was initiated not to inform *whether* to reach the 0.5% target, but *how* to reach it (Hollway et al. 2011, 319–21). This message also permeated the public communications concerning the Independent Review. For example, Rudd's press release initiating the Independent Review explained that the Independent Review was "design to maximise the effectiveness of the aid program, as Australia increases its Official Development Assistance to 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income by 2015-16" (Rudd 2010c, emphasis added).

I am not suggesting that the Independent Review was not of the highest quality, or only nominally independent. On the contrary, the consensus view of those I spoke with who were involved in the decisionmaking episode uniformly affirmed Rudd's own recollections of the

¹⁹⁸ I acknowledge that this claim is not supported by all of those I spoke with. One interviewee suggested to me that he believed Hollway, the Chair of the Independent Review, was free to report back to Rudd that the expansion was proceeding too rapidly. Nonetheless, the balance of the evidence I uncovered, suggested that Hollway and his team were circumscribed in what they could feasibly recommend.

¹⁹⁹ I obtained a photocopy of this letter.

process as being a “first class exercise in Australian public policy” (Rudd 2012). My claim is that the Review Panel were unavoidably working within parameters that were deliberately circumscribed by Rudd. The Review Panel would need to feel extremely uncomfortable about the wisdom and feasibility of the 0.5% target to even consider recommending against it, and there was almost no chance of this.

Professor Stephen Howes²⁰⁰ was a member of the Review Panel and widely seen as providing the intellectual carriage of the Review, along with Hollway. Howes specifically raised with me the implausibility of reporting back to Rudd that his target was “wrong”. Howes conceded that Review Team did sometimes discuss the merits of the 0.5% target and its timing, but confirmed that “we put those discussions to one side” in preparing the report²⁰¹. Another interviewee I spoke with remembered an occasion when Sandy Hollway, who chaired the Review Panel, pondered aloud the merits of such a large aid program in front of senior AusAID officials. Nonetheless, while the Review Panel duly noted in their report that that “the aid program is already complex and large and ramping it up to 0.5 per cent of GNI poses significant challenge” (Hollway 2011, 26), the overriding message emerging from the Independent Review was that the aid program was fundamentally sound. This was how it was interpreted in both the media (Gartrell 2011) and within AusAID at the time²⁰².

Once the Review Team handed down their Report in late April 2011, the decisionmaking episode transitioned to a distinct second phase. A new secretariat was formed within AusAID to prepare the government’s response to the Independent Review, which was published in July as *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering Real Results* (AusAID 2011). Rudd’s desire to see these two documents issued simultaneously meant that the secretariat had to prepare *An Effective Aid Program* in a compressed timeframe. To commence the process, the secretariat produced an initial draft policy. Then, over an intense two-month period, this draft was continually refined and updated, chiefly in response to Rudd’s direction. Despite travelling extensively during this period, Rudd would often write the team from far-flung locations with his feedback on the latest draft. He would litter the margins of the latest iteration of the drafts with mark-ups to be fed into the next iteration of the policy. Rudd’s chief of staff, Philip Green, was also highly involved, reflecting the priority his boss placed on the process.

²⁰⁰ Howes is a Professor of economics at the Australian National University and the founding (and current) director of the ANU’s Development Policy Centre.

²⁰¹ Personal interview with Stephen Howes, January 2016.

²⁰² Richard Moore, who was the head of the Asia Division (First Assistant Director General) at AusAID at the time of the Independent Review, and who had earlier been involved in preparing The Simons Report in 1997, cautioned me that “nobody reads those reports. There’s a headline out of them. And so the headline out of [the Independent Review] was: ‘the place is reasonably sound’”.

Green and James Batley, the Deputy Director General at AusAID who was taken offline to oversee the secretariat, would meet regularly over coffee to discuss the status of the latest draft and iron out messaging in a difficult section. Batley explained to me how Rudd would personally draft and refine detailed sections of the document²⁰³. For example, Rudd would specify how to re-number strategic goals, rearrange how diagrams were to be displayed, and tinker with important phrases (the reworked versions of which would often end up in his speeches). In short, Rudd digested and approved of every word in *An Effective Aid Program*. The policy was, in a way that is rare for such documents, uniquely Rudd's.

Finally, it was also Rudd who directed the AusAID team to find a way to essentially agree with all of the Independent Review's 39 recommendations. He was eager to be able to convey a simple and clear message in the document: that the Government was in agreement with the Review Panel. As Annex A of *An Effective Aid Program* documents, Rudd's wish was granted²⁰⁴ (AusAID 2011, 59–65). Once again, we see evidence here of Rudd's willingness to intervene directly and decisively in aid policy decisionmaking in order to sustain and promote his personal 0.5% project.

5.2.3 The Cresting of the Rudd Aid Salience Shock

Rudd's influence over Australian aid policy peaked during 2011 as his multitasking reached new levels. In addition to stepping up his duties in aid policymaking, Rudd maintained his twin roles as the chief advocate, and chief political protector, of Australia's aid expansion. In early July 2011, Rudd delivered a pair of speeches launching the Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness and the Government's response. After addressing the public launch in the morning (Rudd 2011b), Rudd tabled the Independent Review in Parliament in the afternoon, making the case that the expansion of the aid program was sustainable and exhorting his Parliamentary colleagues that "our belief in a fair go does not stop at the Australian continental shelf" (Rudd 2011d). Rudd also made his now customary journey to the United Nations General Assembly in September, suggesting that Australia's aid expansion would soon make its "ODA budget approximately the 6th largest in the world" (Rudd 2011e).

Behind the scenes, Rudd retained his iron grip on the aid budget. Preparation for the first Gillard Government' budget occurred at the same time as the Independent Review was being

²⁰³ Personal interview with James Batley, January 2016.

²⁰⁴ Only recommendation 29 was challenged, on the basis that renaming the title of the Minister of Foreign Affairs was a matter for the Prime Minister.

conducted. The 2011-12 budget allocated an additional \$474 million in funding over the coming financial year, projecting a real increase of 8.4% in the Australia's total ODA (Rudd 2011a, 3). Ultimately, the realised increase in the aid budget during 2011-12 represented the second largest nominal year-to-year increase in the aid budget in its history²⁰⁵, behind only the 2008-09 budget—Rudd's first as Prime Minister (Howes 2015b).

Rudd ensured the 2011-12 budget gelled with the recommendations of the Review and resisted mounting political pressure to cut the aid budget. In a post-2011-12 budget analysis, Daniel Flitton (2011) reported how spending on the aid program was "untouchable", despite "green eyes" within the bureaucracy being directed at AusAID. Flitton observed that "politically the aid budget ranks as a protected species" and could not be touched by the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC). Triangulating other reporting from the period reveals it was Rudd who was crucial to upholding the aid budget. In November 2011, against the background of the ERC reconvening to commence preparations ahead of the 2012-13 budget, Steve Lewis (2011) reported that it was Rudd who was preventing any reduction of the aid budget: "[s]ome Government ministers say aid spending is 'out of control' but admit any decision to slow the rate of growth will be fiercely resisted by Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd". In this story, Lewis (2011) quotes a Government source acknowledging that, while some members of the ERC were looking to cut aid, "some view it as off limits, because of Rudd." Greg Sheridan (2013) later confirmed that Rudd "controlled the aid budget in obsessive detail when he was foreign minister."

How was Rudd able to retain such influence over the ERC, given he was no longer the leader of his party? Rudd enjoyed an unusual level of autonomy while Foreign Minister for two main reasons. First, the 2010 election resulted in a hung parliament. The Gillard government depended on the support of the Australian Greens and a trio of independents to obtain a razor-thin majority in the House of Representatives. The prospect of Rudd resigning, and thereby triggering a by election in what would become a marginal seat in the absence of Rudd, had the potential to bring down the Gillard Government. Second, during the 2010 election campaign Rudd reportedly demanded to be appointed Foreign Minister in exchange for ending damaging leaking which was jeopardising Labor's chances for re-election²⁰⁶. Rudd, for his part, denies any deal was made. Whatever the truth, Gillard (2014, 169), was adamant that "after the 2010

²⁰⁵ In percentage terms, the 2008-09 and 2011-12 budgets delivered, respectively, 14% and 10% real increases over the previous year's budget (constant 2015-16 prices), representing the third and fifth largest real increases in the aid budget since 1972-73.

²⁰⁶ Gillard recounts how "during the campaign Kevin had extorted his appointment" (Gillard 2014, 170). While Rudd denies extorting the appointment, Kelly (2014, Chapter 23) assembles compelling evidence, including from interviews undertaken with senior Ministers Swan and Smith and others, that this is what transpired.

election, I never had a Foreign Minister I could rely on” as “Kevin used [the foreign minister] role as a platform for leadership games”²⁰⁷. So, for a variety of reinforcing personal and political reasons, Rudd operated at arm’s length from Gillard while Foreign Minister—an arrangement that temporarily suited both parties.

After only 17 months as Foreign Minister, Rudd manufactured a leadership challenge by resigning his cabinet post in February 2012 while abroad in the United States. Rudd lost this challenge and returned to the backbench for the first time since 2001. For seven years, Rudd had consistently provided the forward momentum for the aid expansion; his sudden departure from cabinet left his 0.5% project vulnerable. While none of the other key Gillard Government figures were actively opposed to the 0.5% target, neither were they personally and politically invested in it to the extent Rudd was²⁰⁸. Rudd was the lone champion of the 0.5% target on Labor’s frontbench²⁰⁹.

Rudd’s departure from cabinet immediately triggered speculation that aid would be cut in the forthcoming 2012-13 budget. Stephen Howes suggested a delay of the target by up to five years was likely, conceding that “with Kevin Rudd gone, there’s no longer a champion for this aid expansion” (quoted in Chandler 2012). World Vision Australia’s Andrew Johnson, remembers that from the “moment [Rudd] was gone, it was on for young and old, and up to five years push out [of the 0.5% target], from 2015 to 2020, was what was on the table.”

In retrospect, it is clear the 2012-13 budget was a watershed moment for the Australian aid expansion. At the time, however, its lasting significance was much less obvious. After all, the date for achieving the 0.5% target had only pushed back by one year—a decision that, while shocking to the development sector as a whole, was considered a substantial win by those aid advocates who were politically engaged. Looking back, what cements the 2012-13 budget as a critical juncture in the trajectory of Australian aid policy—quite aside from the fact that it is the historical peak of Australia’s ODA to GNI ratio—is that this was when the new currents driving Australia’s aid policy were first detectable. The removal of the Rudd aid salience shock as a propellant driving aid spending upwards coincided almost exactly with the emergence of a

²⁰⁷ This latter accusation is supported in most detail by a book length investigation by journalist Kerry-Anne Walsh (2013). See also a long article in *The Monthly* by Erik Jensen (2013).

²⁰⁸ Personal interview with Amanda Robbins, February 2016.

²⁰⁹ Although it didn’t specifically use the term, the Independent Review had acknowledged the importance of a political champion in Government to maintain momentum for the scale up: “The aid program is already complex and large, and ramping it up to 0.5 per cent of GNI poses a significant challenge. It will require high levels of leadership, planning, resourcing and implementation. The direction and the framework need to be set from the top level of government” (Hollway et al. 2011, 26).

powerful countervailing salience shock—the politicisation of the budget deficit. The combined effect led to a dramatic change in the trajectory of aid spending in Australia.

§§§

5.3 Reversing the Aid Expansion: The Politicisation of the Budget Deficit

I erred in making the budget surplus for a nominated year the symbol of everything about our economic management.

—Julia Gillard

For some reason, the Australian government kept repeating the mantra that we would return to a budget surplus in year 'X'.

—P.N. Junankar

The Australian economy proved remarkably resilient in response to the Global Financial Crisis (Junankar 2013). Yet despite Australia's rude economic health when compared to other OECD countries—particularly the UK and the Netherlands—a sequence of factors combined to mean that the budget deficit came to dominate post-GFC political debate in Australia (Garnaut 2013, 84). A political environment emerged in which the credibility and thus electability of Australia's political leaders became intimately tied to the state of the budget deficit, with the projected budget balance becoming the most important proxy for evaluating the economic management credentials of the Government of the day.

In this climate, the aid budget acquired an elevated status. Especially because the Rudd aid salience shock had pushed aid spending to historically high levels, reducing aid spending represented a relatively politically painless way for the Gillard and Abbott Governments to demonstrate they were taking the task of 'budget repair' seriously. In begin this section by tracing the development of the budget deficit aid salience shock before recounting two important examples of how this salience shock led to aid policy change during the early stages of the Abbott Government.

5.3.1 *The Emergence of the Budget Deficit Aid Salience Shock*

The politicisation of the budget deficit in Australia has its roots in the decisions taken by the Rudd Government in the immediate aftermath of the GFC. Between October 2008 and February 2009, the Rudd Government enacted a series of economic stimulus packages to prime the Australian economy and ward off a recession, a policy response that was widely lauded²¹⁰ (Wanna 2015, 313; Rayner and Wanna 2015, 18). While the Coalition supported the initial stimulus measures, it withdrew its support for enacting further stimulus measures in early 2009 (Swan 2014, 272). Instead, the Coalition began to characterise Labor's ongoing intervention in the economy as excessive, highlighting "the Government's supposed profligacy and irresponsibility in implementing the stimulus programs." (Rayner and Wanna 2015, 18).

A critical juncture in the politicisation of the budget deficit occurred when Tony Abbott replaced Malcolm Turnbull as Opposition Leader in December 2009. Abbott immediately intensified the Opposition's attacks on the Government's economic management. While Abbott was unpopular with the public, his "simple and hostile" (D. Marr 2012, 83) political message was "ruthlessly effective" (Strangio and Walter 2015, 53; D. Marr 2012). In an attempt to nullify Abbott's attacks, Labor promised during the 2010 federal election campaign that they would return the budget to surplus by 2013 (Gillard 2014, 337). However, from late 2011 onwards, the release of the official forward estimates repeatedly "involved a large downward revision of revenue—for the current year and the several years beyond" (Garnaut 2013, 112) and Gillard and Swan soon found themselves boxed in by their "firm and unqualified commitments to securing a budget surplus" (Garnaut 2013, 112). As the epigraph commencing this section reflects, Gillard regretted her role in politicising the budget deficit (Gillard 2014, 354). So did her Deputy and Treasurer Wayne Swan, who recalled in his memoirs how "[i]n the hands of our opponents, the gap between [the objective of returning the Budget to surplus] and the continuing fiscal deficit became the benchmark of our performance" (Swan 2014, 264). To a ludicrous extent, the budget deficit had become *the* proxy for economic management credibility in Australian politics (Kudelka 2011).

The politicisation of the budget deficit had direct implications for the aid budget. As I alluded to in the previous section, the 2012-13 Budget represented the tipping point for the aid expansion. It was handed down on 8 May 2012, just three months after Rudd's resignation. "As we set about formulating the 2012-13 Budget," Swan (2014, 293) recounted in his memoirs "our

²¹⁰ Treasurer Wayne Swan was later named world finance minister of the year, while many considered Rudd's response to the GFC as his defining achievement as Prime Minister, including Julia Gillard (2014, 10). See also Megalogenis (2010, 11).

overwhelming aim was to put in place the funding for our big schemes [the Gonski education reforms and the National Disability Insurance Scheme], while mapping out a path to surplus". With these spending imperatives framing the budget, aid spending became squeezed. In his press release issued the day the 2012-13 budget was handed down, Senator Bob Carr (2012b)—who had replaced Rudd as Foreign Minister—made it clear that the "tight fiscal environment" was to blame for deferring the 0.5% target by a year, a measure which saved \$2.9 billion from the budget's bottom line over the forward estimates period.

Amanda Robbins is uniquely placed to comment on the forces that caused the Golden Consensus to buckle, given she is one of the few individuals in the Australian context who worked as both a political insider (as a senior adviser to Swan) and a development insider (as a senior adviser for World Vision Australia) during the period when the politicisation of the budget deficit intensified²¹¹. Robbins hypothesised that, "first and foremost... the consensus broke down [due to] domestic fiscal pressures." Yet, in a crucial admission, she also noted that the pressure to find budget savings during this period was "arguably more important politically than economically..." Robbins stressed that senior Labor figures took no delight in cutting aid and were particularly conscious that their decision had the potential to "fuel the cause for more cuts", by undermining the credibility of the 0.5% target. Nonetheless, the decision to push back the date for achieving 0.5% ultimately became "a choice that politically and economically they decided needed to be taken." Furthermore, there was a concern about the ability of AusAID to maintain the quality of aid given the pace of growth in the aid budget—a concern that was shared by senior AusAID staff (as was highlighted in subsection 5.2.1).

The 2012-13 budget represents the inflection point in Australia's aid policy spending trajectory. It served as a clarify moment, at least for unsentimental observers, of how the political power dynamics around aid spending had irreversibly changed. Aid policy had suddenly become salient, and relevant for political decisionmakers because cutting aid was an easy target for expedient short term cuts to address the budget deficit, the most pressing political concern of the period. And Rudd was unavailable to play his role as aid's political protector. The lack of a broad-based public reaction to Labor's aid cuts in the 2012-13 budget only served to reinforce the logic of the new political cost-benefit analysis surrounding aid spending²¹². After May 2012, the 0.5% target

²¹¹ Robbins worked as a senior adviser to Treasurer Swan for two years from January 2009, before moving to a role as a senior adviser to the CEO and manager of government relations for World Vision. Robbins returned to Swan's office after being appointed Deputy Chief of Staff in December 2012, the position she held during the formulation of the 2013-14 budget.

²¹² Moreover, delaying the target in the 2012-13 budget created a future spending trajectory that was entirely unrealistic, requiring record increases 4 years in a row (Howes 2012a).

was no longer taboo: the genie was out of the bottle and the new forces driving aid spending were uncorked.

Labor enacted three additional cuts to aid spending in the fifteen months following the 2012-13 budget cuts²¹³, including delaying the achieving the 0.5% target by another year in the 2013-14 budget (i.e. backdating the date for achievement to 2017-18) (see Table 5.C below). While cuts to aid generated a total of \$5.8 billion in savings over the second half of the Gillard Government (ABC News 2015), Labor maintained an ostensible commitment to the 0.5% target. So, too, did the Coalition. Indeed, in the lead up to the Federal Election in September 2013, both parties appeared to “maintain a general commitment to aid growth” (R. Davies 2013c). In reality, however, Abbott and key members of the Coalition were keenly aware of the new political calculus governing aid spending.

Table 5.C: Published Estimates of the Trajectory of Australia's ODA to GNI Ratio over the Forward Estimates Period (2008-09 to 2013-14)²¹⁴

Occasion	Type of Cut	Savings ²¹⁵	Forward Estimates (i.e. planned future spending)								
			09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18
2008-09 Budget			0.35	0.37	0.38				0.5		
2009-10 Budget	Back-end Target			0.35	0.37	0.40			0.5		
2010-11 Budget	Back-end Target				0.35	0.38	0.42		0.5		
2011-12 Budget						0.38	0.42	0.46	0.5		
2012-13 Budget ²¹⁶	Delay Target	\$2.9b					0.37	0.41	0.45	0.5	
2013-14 Budget	Delay Target	\$1.9b						0.39	0.41	0.45	0.5
Aug 13 Statement	Back-end Target	\$0.97b						0.40	0.41	0.41	0.5

5.3.2 Exhibit A: The Coalition's pre-election Aid Cuts

At 2:30pm on 5 September 2013, less than 42 hours before polls were scheduled to open in the Australian Federal Election, Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey and Shadow Minister for Finance, Deregulation and Debt Reduction Andrew Robb conducted a joint press conference in Melbourne to announce the Coalition's intention to cut foreign aid spending by \$4.5 billion (Hockey and Robb 2013b). Hockey and Robb's last-minute unveiling of new savings measures, of which the cut to aid was the largest, was calculated to bring the politicisation of the budget

²¹³ I am including Carr's 'ODA diversion' of 2012 as a cut. See footnotes from Table 5.A.

²¹⁴ Table 5.C draws from the following sources (Stephen Smith and McMullan 2008, 2009, 2010; Rudd 2011a; B. Carr 2012a, 2013; Howes 2013c; ABC News 2015).

²¹⁵ Nominal savings generated over the four-year forward estimates period.

²¹⁶ In December 2012, Foreign Minister Carr (2012c) announced a \$0.375b 'diversion' of ODA to finance asylum seeker costs, which in practice, reduced the aid budget although not Australia's official ODA contribution (see also Howes 2012b, 2013a).

deficit to the boil just as voters were maximally involved in the campaign. The savings generated from cuts to aid allowed the Coalition to claim their policies would result in an “improved budget bottom line” (Hockey and Robb 2013a). Aid policy had become salient, yet it featured at a critical point in the election campaign not because of any inherent prominence, but because it had become such a valuable tool for ‘fixing the budget’.

While the Coalition’s cuts to aid were announced at last minute, and took the development constituency by surprise (Coutts 2013), an overwhelming degree of corroborating evidence allows me to conclude that this decision was both well planned and politically astute. To begin with, because responding to the ‘budget emergency’ was the defining issue of the 2013 federal election campaign²¹⁷, the Coalition were extraordinarily deliberate in the way they approached costings. “Joe knew costings were the biggest risk to a Coalition victory”, records Hockey’s biographer, Madonna King, “and he knew he couldn’t afford to stuff up” (M. King 2014a, Loc 3437)²¹⁸. Hockey had begun working with a trio of independent costings experts at the beginning of 2013 to ensure the Coalitions election policy proposals were verified. Hockey and Robb²¹⁹ were responsible for overseeing a detailed costings process for the Coalition ahead of the 2013 election²²⁰. The Coalition also decided ahead of time to use the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) to confirm the budget impact of its policies (Reece 2015, 113). In a key piece of evidence suggesting the aid cuts were part of a closely worked through strategy, Reece (2015, 117) relates despite having the PBO cost many policies, the Coalition ultimately opted to release only a small number of their policies it had drafted “because it had a commanding lead in the polls and opted for a small target strategy”.

The Coalition ran a ruthlessly disciplined campaign (Rayner and Wanna 2015, 17). At the centre of the campaign were a small group ultimately responsible for coordinating the campaign (and policy and costings), who assembled for dinner together at Melbourne’s Park Hyatt Hotel on the night of Rudd’s ‘black hole’ allegations²²¹. I consider it highly likely that the ‘Park Hyatt Group’—which included Hockey, Abbott, Robb (who was absent from the dinner), Liberal Party Federal Director and Coalition Campaign Director Brian Loughnane and Abbott and Hockey’s chiefs of

²¹⁷ Internal Liberal Party polling conducted during this period confirmed that, “[e]conomic management, broadly defined... was by far the most significant issue” (Loughnane 2015, 199). See also Wanna (2015).

²¹⁸ Grattan (2013) and Oakes (2013, 317–19) confirm Hockey’s personal investment in the veracity of the costings process.

²¹⁹ Andrew Robb’s appointment to this role is significant. He is a substantial figure in the Liberal party; a known powerbroker and former Federal Director of the Liberal Party.

²²⁰ In his post-election account, Federal Director of the Liberal Party and Coalition Campaign Director Brian Loughnane (2015, 199) confirmed that “Joe Hockey and Andrew Robb oversaw a rigorous, detailed process that gave us great confidence in the viability of the policies we announced.”

²²¹ An account of this dinner and surrounding events is provided by Hockey’s Biographer Madonna King (2014a, Chapter 21).

staffs, Peta Credlin and Grant Lovett respectively—reached final agreement on cutting aid during this dinner. While confident of victory by this stage, this inner circle reaffirmed their small target strategy and, I believe, likely war-gamed how to choreograph the aid cut announcement to elicit maximum political advantage in the media.

Hockey and Robb's announcement took place one hour after Kevin Rudd's final set piece of the campaign. Rudd had briefly returned as Prime Minister in the last days of the Labour Government, after Julia Gillard's colleagues ousted her as their electoral prospects nosedived. Hockey and Robb's move ensured Rudd would not be able to respond and that the cuts would get maximum media exposure (Grattan 2013; Ireland and Hall 2013). Coalition strategists knew that the Coalition's 'surprise' cuts to the aid budget would dominate the evening news a few hours later and would be front page news across Australia on the final day before the election²²². Senior Coalition figures were scrupulously 'on message', regarding the cuts, both in how they went about 'selling' the cuts and defending them in the 24 hours following the aid cut announcement. Three talking points appear to have been agreed. First, Coalition figures were at pains to emphasise that they were choosing to prioritise infrastructure spending over aid spending (Hockey and Robb 2013b; Gordon 2013; Errington and van Onselen 2015, 39). Second, senior Coalition figures repeatedly emphasised that the cuts were merely 'reducing the rate of growth' in the aid budget (Hockey and Robb 2013b, 2013a)²²³. Finally, Coalition figures repeated the claim that borrowing from overseas to fund aid commitments was unsustainable²²⁴ (Bishop 2013). This line helped the Coalition to demonstrate it was taking action on 'paying back the debt', while chiming with the instincts of numerous conservative voters who tended to believe "charity begins at home". In a doorstep interview only hours after Hockey and Robb's costing announcement, the first two questions directed at Abbott were about the cuts to aid. Abbott's responses contained all three of the talking points above (Abbott 2013a).

The decision to highlight the cut to aid was a politically effective strategy. The Park Hyatt Group understood that aid was a politically "soft target", as a number of journalists immediately noted (Grattan 2013; Jericho 2013; Gordon 2013). "The issue is not a mass vote changer" reported Grattan (2013); "most people just don't care enough." The bottom line for raiding the aid budget, Grattan suggested, was obvious: "raiding foreign aid has made it easier to avoid cuts in areas such as health and education, which can be vote changer." Aid's low salience meant it was

²²² A front page headline on 6 September in *The Australian*, one of Australia's two national newspapers, read 'Aid cuts, 'stop the boats' dividend underpin Hockey's \$42bn savings' (Crowe 2013).

²²³ Based on the figures the Coalition provided, this claim appeared to be untrue. An analysis by Stephen Howes (2013d) concluded that "[t]he cuts... imply \$656 million being taken from the aid budget in the current year."

²²⁴ This claim too, was shown to be misleading. Media watchdog website Politifact Australia rated the claim as 'mostly false' (E. Harvey and Pash 2013).

easily sacrificed. In fact, aid spending was doubly dispensable because the public understood that the aid budget had grown rapidly under Rudd, meaning cutting aid became a more potent symbol for the Coalition to demonstrate it was ‘serious’ about repairing the budget.

The Park Hyatt Group knew the cuts would not provoke a public backlash. They had already witnessed how little effective pushback Labor had received from the development constituency or the broader electorate for cutting aid under Gillard. Furthermore, they could surmise from both public and private polling and focus group research that Australian’s were growing increasingly concerned with the growing deficit (Loughnane 2015, 193) and that reducing aid was welcomed by three-quarters of voters who believed spending cuts were necessary²²⁵. Ultimately, however, the most compelling demonstration of the irresistible political logic of cutting the aid budget at a time of hyper-politicisation of the budget deficit was the fact that the Coalition repeatedly ‘went back to the well’ returning twice more during the Abbott Government to derive savings from this “soft target” (Wade 2016), making for three major cuts in just fifteen months (see Table 5.D below). (Although it is outside the time period for this study, it is also notable that the Turnbull Government, which succeeded the Abbott Government, made an additional cut to aid spending in the in the 2016-17 budget (Dornan 2017)).

Table 5.D: Abbott Government Cuts to Aid, 2013-2016

Cut #	Name	Date Announced	Total Savings over Forward Estimates (\$ billion) ²²⁶
1	Pre-Election Aid Cuts	5 Sep 2013	4.60
2	2014-15 Budget Cuts	13 May 2014	7.60 ²²⁷
3	2014-15 Mid-year Economic Update Cuts (MYEFO)	15 Dec 2014	3.70

5.3.3 Exhibit B: The 2014-15 Budget Cuts

In May 2014, eight months after the Coalition’s surprising pre-election aid cut, Hockey announced aid would be cut by a further \$7.6 billion (Hockey 2014). The way the Coalition presented these cuts in the 2014-15 budget is a key piece of evidence supporting my argument that the politicisation of the budget deficit provided a key the impetus to change aid policy.

²²⁵ An opinion poll conducted by Essential Vision on 13 August, midway through the campaign, asked voters whether the government should raise taxes, cut spending or combination to reduce the national debt. 76% of respondents who favoured some form of spending cuts indicated that “foreign aid was an area where government spending should be reduced” (Burkot and Wood 2015, 6–7). This was the highest percentage of the 15 areas surveyed.

²²⁶ Total savings over the forward estimates period (i.e. current year plus three future years)

²²⁷ The forward estimates quote in this budget included an additional (fourth) future year.

After assuming office, Abbott and Hockey found the financial situation to be worse than they had expected. Having campaigned on “addressing the ‘budget emergency’” (M. King 2014a, Loc 3574) the pair found themselves in a dilemma: “they could keep their [pre-election] promises or address the broken budget. But they could not do both satisfactorily” (Kelly 2014, Loc 10506). Hockey’s budget speech left no doubt as to the chosen course: “[w]ithout change, the Budget would never get to surplus and the debt would never be repaid” Hockey (2014) declared: “[s]o the time to fix the budget is now.” Cuts to aid spending were singled-out as prime evidence that the Coalition was taking appropriate measures to achieve this imperative: “Since coming to office, we have carefully and methodically looked at all areas of government spending” continued Hockey (2014), before immediately adding: “The government has decided to reduce the growth in our foreign aid budget to save \$7.9 billion [sic] over five years²²⁸.”

The cuts to the aid budget were the largest single saving in the budget—an outcome that was deliberately choreographed. Contrary to convention, the Coalition’s reference to cuts in the aid budget incorporated an additional future year into the forward estimates; they announced savings accrued over four future years, rather than the conventional three²²⁹. This was especially significant because in this fourth out-year (2017-18), the aid budget, on existing projections, was scheduled to increase by \$3.5 billion (or close to half of the total savings resultant from the aid cut) in a single year. This forecasted ramp up in expenditure of \$3.5 billion in 2017-18 was simply not credible.

Nonetheless, incorporating this proposed future expenditure into their scheduled savings allowed the Government to present the cuts to aid as the single largest saving measure in the budget—a detail that was highlighted in the budget summary (Commonwealth of Australia 2014, 33). Normally, because the fourth out-year is not published, it cannot be included in the forward estimates and thus cannot be ‘counted’ as a saving. But the Coalition appeared to deliberately change this convention in order to be able to demonstrate that aid savings were in fact larger than they would have otherwise been, giving the impression of doing more to fix the

²²⁸ This reference to \$7.9 billion in the Treasurer’s speech was a typo. The actual figure, as the budget documents specified, was \$7.6 billion.

²²⁹ A budget guide developed by the Parliamentary Library (R. Webb 2001) gave the following explanation for ‘forward estimates’: “Forward Estimates are rolling three-year estimates of what would be appropriated assuming that government policy is on-going. Forward Estimates therefore do not include new programs, the expansion of existing programs that the government has not agreed to, or programs that are expected to end (emphasis added)”. Based on this explanation, the 2014-15 budget appears to contravene the conventions in two respects; extending the estimates period by a year, and including the expansion of a program (i.e. the aid program) that they clearly not agreed to in light of the pre-election cuts.

budget, as well as providing political cover because cuts to aid, and not a domestic cut, was doing most of this ‘heavy lifting’²³⁰.

The Coalition was confident they would not be harmed politically when emphasising the cuts to aid in order to reinforce their message of fixing the budget. In fact, pre-budget polling suggested they would benefit from this decision. An Essential Media poll taken on 5 March, suggested that by far the most respondents preferred the government to cut spending rather than raise taxes in order to reduce national debt (47% to 6%, with 19% preferring both, 20% neither and 8% ‘don’t know’). Of those who preferred reducing spending, or enacting both spending cuts and tax increases, 79% said that the government should reduce foreign aid spending (Burkot and Wood 2015, 28). Those preparing the budget would have been well aware of these results and almost certainly would have conducted focus groups to further understand these preferences²³¹. In a post-budget poll published by Essential Media, 64% of voters supported the decision to freeze aid spending. 83% of Coalition voters were in agreement with the freeze to aid spending, while Labor voters—traditionally more supportive of aid spending than Coalition voters—also overwhelmingly supported the freeze (Day 2014a; Burkot and Wood 2015, 27). As McDonald (2015, 663) summarises, “resources committed to a tool of Australian foreign policy were viewed as mechanisms for off-setting domestic funding cuts—an approach that was enabled by Australian domestic political opinion.”

The ‘budget deficit’ aid salience shock was a product of the Abbott government framing cuts to aid as ‘evidence’ that were taking the task of ‘budget repair’ seriously. As a political tactic, it appears to have been successful. “It is clear that the Coalition... singled out foreign aid for cuts” argues Matt Dornan (2017), citing figures showing that government spending since the Coalition took power has climbed over 10% after inflation, while aid spending declined by more than 30% over that period. Wade (2016) agrees. “While aid is only about 1 per cent of budget expenditure”, he points out, “it has made up around 25 per cent of all budget cuts announced by the government for the period 2013-14 to 2018-19.”²³² “Aid has been singled out for cuts that are disproportionate relative to other areas of spending”, continues Dornan, before concluding

²³⁰The Coalition’s move surprised those in the aid sector who watched the budget closely. Andrew Johnson, team leader for government relations for World Vision at the time, explained it to me this way: “They folded in a nominal jump that was never real [thereby] inflat[ing] the figure that was cut to make it sound even bigger than it was...” Johnson was in no doubt as to the reason for this: they [Hockey and Abbott] were keen for it to be the biggest budget saving.” Amanda Robbins reacted similarly: “the Government appears to have inflated the size of that save to make it [the] number one save because they didn’t want to make any of the domestic saves the top save...”

²³¹ Madonna King has documented how polling on the issue of the introduction of a deficit levy directly influenced decision-making during the budget process (M. King 2014a, Loc 3773). Andrew Johnson, of World Vision Australia, also revealed to me that he had focus group research done around this time showing that the “debt and deficit disaster outdid every other rational argument about aid.”

²³² Wade’s figures include current projected expenditure on aid.

that, “[c]learly cutting the aid budget is about priorities for the Coalition, not about fiscal restraint”. In this section, I have shown that cutting was indeed about “other priorities” for the Coalition. Cutting aid was not so much about achieving fiscal restraint as generating the *impression* of fiscal restraint. But the cuts to aid spending were also part of another dynamic entirely, as I now move to explain.

§§§

5.4 Removing the Aid Expansion: Liberal Party Factionalism and Aid

[T]he only issue in recent times that might have split the Liberal Party was the decision to cut into foreign aid spending

—Peter van Onselen, 2011

The rapid reversal of Australia’s aid spending trajectory is not explained by the budget deficit aid salience shock alone. Another salience shock, generated by intra-party divisions within the Liberal Party, also emerged during this period to exert downward pressure on aid spending. These two salience shocks reinforced each other, generating irresistible momentum for aid policy change. Their powerful combined effect ensured that that Australia’s aid expansion was not simply paused, or even wound back, but—in the space of the two-year lifespan of the Abbott Government—entirely reversed. In this section, I trace the emergence of the Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock, showing how aid policy became a touchstone issue in a broader internal party conflict between the liberal (or moderate) and conservative wings of the Liberal Party.

5.4.1 *The Emergence of the Liberal Party Factionalism Aid Salience Shock*

The Liberal Party of Australia is regularly described as a ‘broad church’, the “political custodian of both the liberal and the conservative traditions” (Abbott 2009, 59). Many observers, including Tony Abbott (2009, 59), cite John Howard’s ability to “manage the tensions inside these two different orientations but also to reconcile each to the other” as a key factor explaining Howard’s long tenure as Prime Minister. In late 2009, however, the Party’s liberal and conservative wings

proved unable to reconcile when it came to the issue of climate change, with Abbott himself playing a leading role in the “struggle for internal unity” (Kelly 2014, Loc 820) that engulfed the party from this point, and which still overshadow the Party (A. Crabb 2016, Chapter 9).

The “late 2009 Liberal Party showdown”, as veteran Australian journalist Paul Kelly (2014, Loc 820) has called it, was the starting point of this intra-party struggle and provides “the key to the politics of the period”, including the politics of aid policy²³³. The showdown was triggered when then-Party leader and noted moderate Malcolm Turnbull resolved to support the passage of Rudd’s proposed Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) legislation. The conservative wing was strongly opposed to this decision, for ideological as well as political strategy reasons (see also van Onselen 2011). As Turnbull continued to negotiate with the Government, the right-wing of his party became increasingly agitated. Key figures began to resign. Eventually, a decisive leadership ballot was held on 1 December 2009, contested by Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Joe Hockey (Kelly 2014, Loc 815). Hockey was considered the pre-vote favourite but, after equivocating on his position on climate change, was eliminated in the first round of balloting. In the second round, Abbott defeated Turnbull for the leadership of the Liberal Party by the narrowest of margins, 42 to 41—underscoring just how divided the Party was.

It is broadly accurate, but overly simplistic, to characterise the division in the Liberal Party as pitting ‘climate believers’ (the moderates) against ‘climate sceptics’ (the conservatives) (A. Crabb 2016, Loc 1871). Yet the split was more fundamental than this. “This issue transcended climate change and went to identity and values,” argues Paul Kelly (2014, Loc 905). Climate change became an “ideological wedge” (Kelly 2014, Loc 918), a totemic issue which split open the contrasting beliefs and values of the Party’s dominant factions. Abbott would later tell journalist Paul Kelly that the reason he stood in the leadership challenge was because the climate issue “threatened to split our party and it threatened to break the Coalition” (Kelly 2014, Loc 820). And while the issue of aid policy was not as central to the intraparty divisions in the Liberal Party as climate change during this period, the dynamics played out in a similar fashion.

Aid, too, became a touchstone in the ongoing contest within the party “about policy and ultimately about belief” (Kelly 2014, Loc 791), with pro and anti-aid positions more or less mapping directly with the moderate and conservative factions, respectively. The moderate wing of the Liberal Party, with its internationalist strain, viewed aid spending more favourably than

²³³ For detailed accounts of the 2009 Liberal Party leadership spill, see Crabb (2016), Chapter Seven – ‘Convictions’, and Kelly (2014), Chapter 2 – ‘The Making of An Opposition’. Crabb (2016, 1541) characterises the 2009 Liberal Party leadership spill as “a mighty fulcrum in the affairs of the Liberal Party, and indeed the country.”

the conservative wing and especially the Nationals, the Liberal Party's long-term coalition partners. Moderates were less inclined to have ideological objections to wealth transfer (more broadly) and with government-funded-and-operated aid delivery (more specifically). Yet perhaps even more importantly for the fate of aid spending, the conservative wing prioritised a more rapid return to surplus than their moderate counterparts. Because the conservatives were far more inclined to cut aid to further this objective, aid spending became particularly vulnerable in the emerging environment where the conservative wing held sway over the Liberal Party and the budget deficit aid salience shock was already placing downward pressure on aid spending.

The Liberal Party's conservative wing dominated while Abbott was leader (A. Crabb 2016, Loc 1867), a dominance that was revealed in the ideological composition of key decisionmaking units during this period. For example, conservatives dominated the Park Hyatt Group, which—as discussed in subsection 5.3.2 earlier in this chapter—directed Coalition strategy ahead of the 2013 election and oversaw the pre-election aid cuts. After winning Government, the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) of Cabinet became the authoritative decision unit responsible for establishing budget priorities and coordinating and producing the federal budget. This group's membership was also exclusively derived from the conservative wing of the party, with the notable exception of Hockey, who was from the moderate faction. However, while Shadow Treasurer, Hockey came to the firm view that an 'entitlement culture' had infected Western democracies (Kelly 2014, Loc. 10603). Hockey's biographer Madonna King believes Hockey was genuinely motivated to fix the budget (M. King 2014a, Loc. 7382) and documents how his desire to 'end of the age of entitlement' permeated the Treasurer's approach to preparing the 2014-15 budget (M. King 2014a, Loc. 3763)²³⁴. According to King, Hockey was even more aggressive in wanting to trim the budget than Abbott. With Hockey's economic priorities aligning so closely with his conservative colleagues, the ERC functioned as an ideologically homogenous group.

Another similarity Hockey and his conservative colleagues on the ERC (and in the Park Hyatt Group, for that matter) shared was a distinct lack of political or personal commitment to expanding aid²³⁵. The unwillingness of these politicians, particularly Abbott and Hockey, to voice

²³⁴ According to Errington and Van Onselen (2015, 90), Hockey's 'The End of the Age of Entitlement' speech, delivered in London in April 2012 (Hockey 2012), represented "a transparent attempt to provide an ideological edge to [Hockey's] cuddly persona." See also Kelly (2014, Loc. 10198).

²³⁵ A possible exception is Scott Morrison, an evangelical Christian who expressed, in his maiden speech to Parliament, a desire to see aid spending increased. In any case, Morrison was only appointed to the ERC ahead of the 2015-16 budget (i.e. after the decisions to make the first two aid cuts had already been made) and, later, as Treasurer, oversaw the fourth aid cut.

their full-throated support for the ostensibly bipartisan 0.5% target didn't go unnoticed²³⁶. The ERC members shared an ideological proclivity towards cutting aid, especially given the prominence the expanding aid budget had received during the Golden Consensus expansion²³⁷. The ERC prioritised 'small government' and had philosophical misgivings about the Government's role in aid delivery. This is not to say these men were entirely uninterested in addressing poverty; just that they were sceptical that aid, especially government delivered aid, could fix it. Moreover, the careers of the ERC members had focussed on domestic political issues; none could be classified as internationalist in orientation. They men were wary of international agreements and were united in viewing Australia's standing in the world as deriving more from its economic security than from fulfilling its international obligations. Abbott made this clear in a speech in late 2013, in which he argued that: "Australia's international clout does not rest on the size of our aid budget but on the size of our economy and the weight it gives us in the wider world" (Abbott 2013b).

The shared ideology uniting the ERC was reinforced by existing relationships among the group's key members. Relationships between the "small group of ministers and staffers" that were "responsible for structuring the Abbott government's first budget" (Tingle 2014) were "marked by a lack of acrimony" (M. King 2014a, Loc. 3763). Yet these group dynamics also meant the views of moderates were excluded. The existence of strong friendships—particularly between Hockey and Cormann, who were flatmates in Canberra, and Hockey and Dutton—meant that "much of the horse-trading over cuts was done outside meetings, and by staff, before being brought to the expenditure review committee for public airing" (M. King 2014a, Loc. 3780). Julie Bishop was not party to this horse-trading. Despite being the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party, Bishop was not a member of the ERC and was unable to exert significant influence over budgetary matters, including within her own portfolio. Even if she had wanted to, Bishop was not able to act as a 'political protector' of aid during the Abbott Government in the way that Rudd had and (as we will see in chapter 6) David Cameron did.

²³⁶ For example, after conducting a wide-ranging interview with Abbott in 2011, when he was Opposition Leader, The Australian newspaper's foreign editor Greg Sheridan (2011c), a friend of Abbott's, concluded that the Opposition were "notionally" committed to 0.5 target. Sheridan didn't believe Abbott's notably qualified assurances around the 0.5% target and predicated that the pledge would be abandoned following the conclusion Australia's UN Security Council seat bid.

²³⁷ For an encapsulation of the views of the conservative wing of the Liberal Party regarding aid spending, numerous interviewees referred me to a letter to the editor published in *The Australian* on 7 March 2013 by former Senator and long serving Howard-government Finance Minister Nick Minchin, a conservative powerbroker. Minchin (2013) argued that "Australia's foreign aid budget is in urgent need of reconsideration", adding that the Australian government was "in the ludicrous position of borrowing money overseas to send it back overseas as foreign aid". He suggested the aid budget be frozen at "least until the federal budget was back in surplus".

In fact, as the forthcoming examples documented in the remaining two parts of this section of the chapter demonstrate, Bishop was repeatedly shut out from decisions relating to aid spending, despite their direct relevance to her portfolio responsibilities. Errington and van Onselen (2015, 90) agree that Bishop's sidelining had a direct impact on aid spending:

Much to Julie Bishop's annoyance, aid was both an easy target and another issue scorned by the party's social conservative and free marketeers. In spite of being deputy leader, Bishop was not on the ERC, and was therefore unable to save her department from cuts²³⁸.

5.4.2 Exhibit A: The 2011 Flood Levy Precedent

The reason I have chosen to relate an episode I have labelled 'The Flood Levy Precedent' in this part of this chapter is because of how it foreshadows, in a remarkably accurate way, how aid policy decisionmaking would operate during the life of the future Abbott Government. This episode established a pattern that was repeated on each on each of three occasions that the future Abbott Government decided to cut aid (refer Table 5.D). It therefore serves to reveal the remarkably uniform way in which the Liberal Party Factionalism salience shock provided the impetus to reduce aid spending in Australia over the duration of the Abbot Government. The flood levy precedent vividly illustrates how the Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock operates. Aid stays on the political agenda because of its role of an ideological wedge, splitting the party into moderate and conservative camps and igniting leadership tensions involving a familiar cast of characters in a familiar aid spending story: Abbott and the conservatives prevail over Bishop and the moderates.

In late January 2011, the Gillard government announced the imposition of a flood levy to generate \$1.8 billion to help fund reconstruction efforts following devastating flooding in South-East Queensland. Abbott quickly rejected the notion of a temporary levy, pledging to find savings elsewhere. However, an initial package of cuts drafted by Opposition Finance Spokesman Andrew Robb triggered serious disagreements within the shadow cabinet, with proposed cuts to aid being one of the most contentious elements and "fiercely opposed by some in the shadow cabinet" (Probyn 2011). In response, a revised package of cuts was drafted by the offices of Abbott, Hockey and Robb (R. Peake 2011; Probyn 2011; Grattan and Oakes 2011) was subsequently considered, and essentially agreed to, by a hastily convened shadow cabinet meeting in Sydney on 4 February. The revised package retained cuts to aid to Africa (Probyn

²³⁸ Bishop's disdain for the ERC was most powerfully expressed in the 'eye-roll incident' in early 2015, in which Bishop was clearly captured on camera in Parliament rolling her eyes at the precise moment Hockey mentioned the ERC (Ireland 2015). The incident made national headlines for a couple of days and contributed to the ongoing leadership tensions which would eventually see Abbott deposed and replaced by Turnbull (M. Kenny 2015a, 2015b).

2011). Crucially, Julie Bishop, who was the Deputy Leader and Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well as a moderate, was not present at the 4 February meeting.

When shadow cabinet met again in Canberra a few days later, Bishop argued “fiercely and passionately” against the proposed cuts to aid to Africa (R. Peake 2011)²³⁹. While the “aid issue sharply divided the frontbenchers” (Grattan and Oakes 2011), Bishop was the senior moderate who took up the fight. In a front-page article in *The Age* newspaper the following day, Grattan and Oakes (2011) reported that Bishop had told her colleagues that “the push to cut African aid flew in the face of Mr Abbott’s election promise to raise foreign aid to 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015.” Another source claimed Bishop had “argued forcefully that Abbott was about to trash his solemn pledge last year [i.e in 2010] to church groups to lift Australia’s foreign aid” (R. Peake 2011)²⁴⁰. Bishop also rejected a suggestion to defer the 0.5% aid target (Grattan and Oakes 2011). This meeting of shadow cabinet reportedly closed with Bishop succeeding in stopping the proposed \$373 million in cuts to the aid program by agreeing to identifying cuts elsewhere (R. Peake 2011).

The next day, Abbott and Hockey held a press conference to unveil \$2 billion worth of proposed cuts in lieu of imposing a flood levy. Here they announced that around a quarter of these savings (\$448 million) would be generated by deferring an aid program in education to Indonesia (Abbott and Hockey 2011). Bishop was blindsided by the announcement of the cut to aid to Indonesia. She was not consulted and “was especially angry because she believe she had successfully defeated an earlier proposal in the shadow ministry meeting to cut the aid budget to Africa” (Dodson 2011).

Bishop was further enraged by a column published the following day in *The Australian* by its foreign affairs editor Greg Sheridan, a friend of Tony Abbott’s and a fellow conservative. Sheridan praised the decision to “take the axe to Australia’s wildly ballooning aid budget” (Sheridan 2011a) and sharply criticised Bishop for fighting the cuts to aid in Africa²⁴¹. With leadership tensions already running high—Robb was reportedly campaigning to acquire the deputy leadership from Bishop (Probyn 2011)—Bishop confronted Abbott about the piece, which she presumably assumed reflected Abbott’s own views (Grattan 10 February; Callick and Alford 2011; Sheridan 2011b).

²³⁹ This formal meeting of shadow cabinet took place on Monday 7th February.

²⁴⁰ Bishop was referencing Abbott’s pledge to uphold the 0.5% target at the Micah Challenge Voices for Justice Event on 21 June 2010.

²⁴¹ Sheridan wrote that Bishop’s behaviour this showed “what a hopeless, hopeless foreign affairs spokeswomen she is”.

The next day, the front page headline of *The Australian* read ‘Bishop Fury at Abbott Aid Savings’ (Callick and Alford 2011). This particular article encapsulates the essence of a story that dominated the news cycle in Australia for two weeks. It reveals the rapid salience attachment process whereby aid spending became intertwined with Liberal Party factionalism to the point where a salience shock emerged. Aid spending was suddenly a vitally important issue to Liberal politicians, and by extension the media, because it had become a touchstone issue dividing the Liberal Party and driving leadership speculation. The story dominated the media not because it was about aid, but because of the party’s leadership was divided.

One would have suspected that senior Liberals would have desired to put this bitter public row behind them in the interests of demonstrating unity, given the story dominated the news for a fortnight. Yet a few months later, in a live television interview on the evening the 2012-13 budget was handed down, Hockey (2011) was unable to hide his frustration at Labor’s record-setting increases to aid spending. (Recall that this was just after the handing down of the Independent Review, at the peak of Rudd’s influence on the aid expansion). “If you want to know what will rile Australians families” suggested Hockey, “the foreign aid budget is increasing by \$6 billion over the next four years”. When the interviewer responded by asking Hockey if he would seek to overturn to aid increase, Hockey responded by saying that “from our perspective, it’s not the major priority at the moment” and explicitly prioritising a rapid return to surplus above achieving the 0.5% target.” Bishop felt the need to respond by issuing a press release the next morning clarifying that the Coalition remained committed to the 0.5% target (Coorey and Oakes 2011).

5.4.3 Exhibit B: The December 2014 MYEFO Aid Cuts

The same parameters established by the Flood Levy precedent characterised the decisionmaking processes leading to the Abbott Government’s first and second cuts to aid (refer Table 5.D). Space doesn’t allow a recounting of these two cuts. Instead, I fast-forward here to examine in detail how the Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock contributed to the Abbott Government’s third aid cut. The divisions in the Coalition over the third cut to aid played out much more publicly than the previous two, making this episode a more relevant and instructive one to focus on.

On October 2 2014, David Crowe reported in *The Australian* that another cut to the aid budget was the “leading option” to cover the cost of the military deployment to fight ISIS (Crowe 2014a).

Cabinet ministers were “canvassing an extension to the freeze in the annual aid increase, perhaps for another two years, so that outlays would start growing again only from 2018-19.” (Crowe 2014a). Bishop responded swiftly, emphatically telling ABC Radio National later that morning that there had been “no discussion in Cabinet along those lines”, adding that “we will abide by the commitments we made in relation to foreign aid” (Hurst 2014; Bishop 2014a). To ensure her message was transmitted, Bishop then conducted a doorstep interview in the Press Gallery at Parliament House where she repeated her earlier line—there “has been no such discussion in Cabinet along those lines”—twice (Bishop 2014b). Following this second interview, Bishop attended a leadership meeting where other senior Cabinet figures were present (Uhlmann 2014). She was reported to have asked “which Minister was talking to the media about her portfolio without consulting her” and “made it clear to her senior colleagues she [would] fight any attempt to cut the foreign aid budget” (Uhlmann 2014).

Bishop was able to repeatedly assert that the prospective aid cuts had not raised in cabinet because, as she well knew, they were first being considered by the ERC (or a subgroup of it)²⁴². This decision unit was now considering the budget as it prepared the Mid-Year Economic and Financial Outlook (MYEFO)²⁴³. Bishop was once again marginalised from the ERC. What made the decisionmaking process leading up to the third cut to aid different to the earlier two was that Bishop was alerted of the potential cuts well ahead of time and decided to fight them. This meant that the friction between Bishop and the ERC—and, by extension, between the conservative and moderate wings of the Liberal Party—played out more publicly than during the first two cuts.

Despite increasing pressures on the budget, including an uncooperative Senate and further declining commodity prices, Abbott and Hockey recommitted to their existing political strategy ahead of announcing the MYEFO in December. The Coalition would return the budget to surplus in four years. As Hockey made clear, this required the Coalition to demonstrate savings in the MYEFO that could offset new expenditure commitments (Crowe 2014b). In an appearance on Sky News Australia’s *Australian Agenda* program on 5 October, Cormann was asked whether there was capacity to find savings from the aid budget. The Finance Minister refused to rule out more cuts to aid, highlighting that “our commitment is not to add to the deficit, not to add to debt...” (Cormann 2014). A couple of days later, Hockey warned from New York, where he was

²⁴² Crowe confirmed this afterwards when he reported that ministers were “examining the foreign aid option and others in meetings of the expenditure review committee of cabinet before the MYEFO changes go to cabinet” (Crowe 2014b).

²⁴³ The MYEFO is a process mandated under Charter of Budget Honesty legislation which “updates the economic and fiscal outlook from the previous budget” (Australian Government 2014).

attending meetings, that lower commodity prices would impact that budget and that “we’ll have more to say in MYEFO” (Crowe 2014b).

For a time, the ERC negotiations played out behind closed doors. The ERC worked through spending proposals with relevant ministers. Then, on 1 December, The Australian Financial Review reported that “foreign aid cuts are back in the government’s sights as it spends the next two weeks looking for more savings to tackle a budget deficit worsened by plunging revenues and the Senate blocking measures” (Coorey and Greber 2014). The article cited ‘senior sources’ as confirming the aid budget would “be trimmed again, despite the internal protests of Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop.” A couple of days later, Davie Wroe (2014), in The Age, reported that Hockey and Cormann were behind the push to cut aid.

By now, Bishop was resigned to her portfolio’s budget being cut once again²⁴⁴. This was revealed by a marked change in approach. On the morning Wroe’s article appeared, Bishop conducted a combative interview on ABC radio where she abandoned her public advocacy for maintaining aid spending and attacked Labor. “If there are savings from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [in the MYEFO] because we cannot get our budget reforms through the Senate,” Bishop vented, “I will blame Labor” (Bishop 2014c). Becoming more personal, Bishop added: “I hope the message is loud and clear: if there are cuts to my department, if there are cuts to the foreign aid budget, it will be [senior Labor figures] Tanya Plibersek, Bill Shorten, Chris Bowne, Tony Burke—their responsibility” (Bishop 2014c). These previous Cabinet Ministers had “vandalised the budget” said Bishop, leaving it in a “state of utter disrepair”. Bishop’s parting promise was to hang any savings found from her department “around the neck of Tanya Plibersek each and every day until the next election”. Bishop’s comments were widely broadcast on radio and repeated in print over the following days (Rajca 2014).

This visceral reaction from Bishop was uncharacteristic. She is renowned as very disciplined and measured politician (M. King 2014b; Mayes 2007; Snow 2013; Callick 2013; Wallace 2015). The outburst was more than Bishop attempting to pre-emptively absolve herself of responsibility for the aid cuts (Benson 2014; S. McDonald 2014); it was the culmination of her deep personal frustration at being continually sidelined by the ERC. To have the aid budget cut again, after she’d repeatedly publicly staked her credibility on maintaining it at \$5 billion, was now becoming politically damaging. It was patently clear Bishop had lost an internal power struggle. She

²⁴⁴ Later, it emerged that Bishop and Cormann had Julie Bishop, had been “involved in a row... at an expenditure review committee meeting two weeks ago when the proposal [to cut aid] was raised.” This places the date of this pivotal ERC meeting at around 1 December.

effectively admitted as much to aid agencies by instructing her staff to tell them to “take up their concern” about the pending aid cuts with Hockey and Abbott (Benson 2014).

On December 15 2014, Hockey and Cormann conducted a joint press conference to announce the release of the MYEFO²⁴⁵. Just as in the 2014-15 budget, the Coalition were happy to highlight the substantial nature of the cuts to aid; Hockey made it clear that cuts to aid were enacted in order to continue the task of ‘budget repair’. Furthermore, the Coalition repeated their strategy from the 2014-15 budget of making aid cuts the largest saving and thus likely the top media story. While taking questions after delivering his address, Hockey volunteered that “the cut in foreign aid is by far the largest reduction [announced in the MYEFO]” (Hockey and Cormann 2014). The 2014-15 MYEFO established that the 2015-16 aid budget would be cut by 20% in a single year, reducing the size of the aid program to \$4 billion—half the size it was projected to be just several years earlier. Analysis by Howes and Pyrke (2014) showed that the Coalition’s third cut represented the single largest single-year cut in the history of the Australia aid program. Unlike the earlier two cuts, which generated savings mostly by trimming projected expenditure from future years, the 2014-15 MYEFO cuts stripped away funding from the forthcoming budget (Day 2014b).

Close watchers of the aid sector knew this decision involved more than just ‘fixing the budget’. After the cuts had been announced, World Vision Australia’s CEO Tim Costello was quoted in a column by Michael Gordon as saying “Julie was in there fighting. She was rolled. Her new aid paradigm [the name Bishop gave to her aid reforms] is in tatters.” As he is a personal friend of Bishop’s, this was an especially frank admission from Costello, and one that he later regretted having been made public. While the aid sector saw Bishop as their only friend in cabinet, they also gradually came to understand that she was not able to wield influence in the ERC. Reflecting on this incident, one development insider told me how:

“The only person who was central to the leadership group who was an ally ours [i.e. the aid sector] was [Bishop], really. [But] we knew, privately, that we were on a hiding to nothing... This was about the internal dynamics within the Liberal Party and within the very senior leadership of the Liberal Party.”

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²⁴⁵ Bishop made sure she was in Papua New Guinea at the time of the announcement.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the major changes in Australia's aid spending trajectory over the past decade as the result of three aid salience shocks. The decade long aid expansion, beginning in 2003-04, was the product of the Rudd aid salience shock. Rudd's belief in the 0.5% target drove him to intervene repeatedly in aid policy decisionmaking episodes to further this policy goal, his considerably authority affording him this privilege. Yet the sudden withdrawal of the upward impetus on aid spending provided by this aid salience shock once Rudd resigned coincided closely with the emergence of two other aid salience shocks, which placed pressure on aid spending in the opposite direction. The intertwining influence of this pair of indirect (type II) aid salience shocks—the budget deficit and Liberal party factionalism aid salience shocks—help explain why the downturn in Australia's aid spending, after cresting at a historical high, was so rapid.

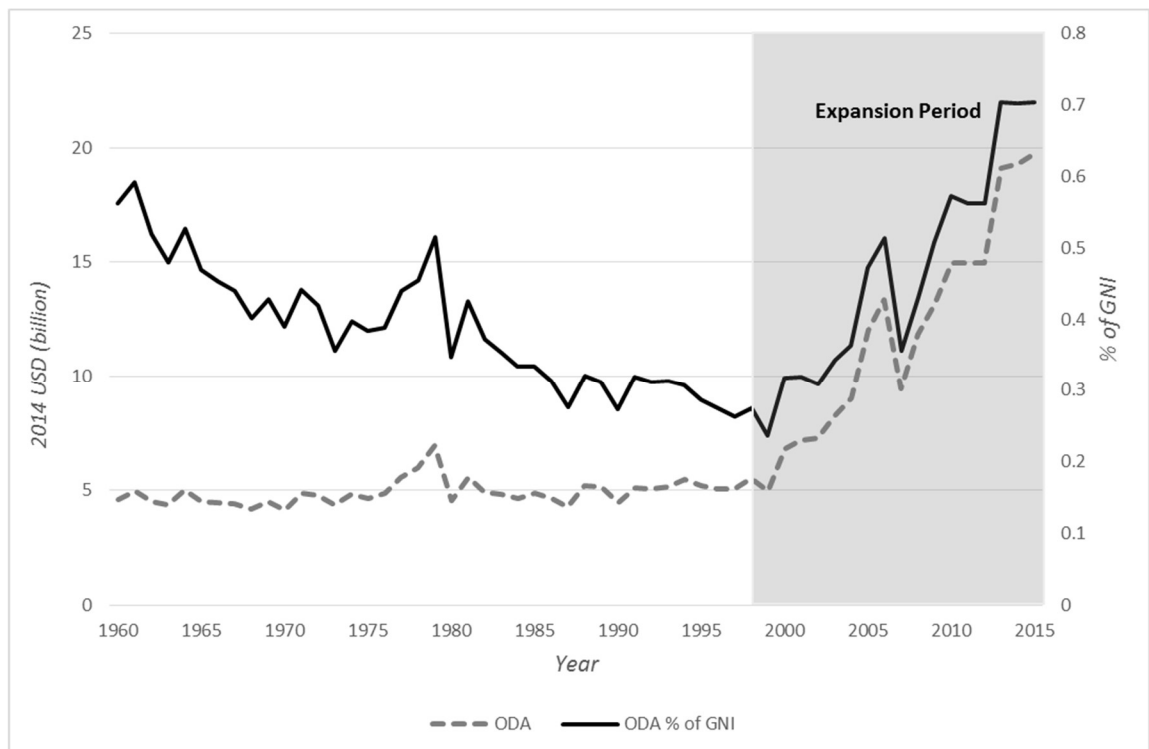
What this account also revealed was how factors from all levels of analysis impacted aid policy decisions. Rudd's championing of the 0.5% target clearly sprang from personal motivation, but his 'doubling down' on John Howard's own aid expansion was also the product of domestic political delineation that also relied on the symbolism of the MDGs. Likewise, the budget deficit aid salience shock could not have emerged without the international backdrop of the global financial crisis and the domestic impact of Tony Abbott's disciplined and ruthless political tactics employed while Opposition leader. We also saw how the dominance of the conservative wing of the Liberal party on the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC) meant that small group dynamics played a crucial role in reducing Australia's aid spending more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case. These examples, and many others besides, show how actor-specific theory can provide a multilevel perspective on aid policy change. The same is true when examining what transpired in the UK, which is the country to which we now turn our attention.

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6 Explaining Aid Policy Change in the United Kingdom

When Tony Blair led the Labour Party to victory in the 1997 election, the UK's spending on ODA was 0.26% of GNI. Sixteen years later, in 2013, it reached 0.7% under a Conservative-led Coalition Government. During this expansion period, British ODA spending almost quadrupled in real terms, growing from USD5 billion in 1997 to USD19 billion in 2013 (see Figure 6.A below)²⁴⁶. This dramatic increase in aid spending is even more remarkable when viewed in historical context. "Historically, British aid policy has been incremental" explains Morrissey (2002, 14) "with no major changes in the allocation or composition of aid following changes of government since the 1960s..." What caused the recent aid spending policy trajectory to veer so decidedly away from its long-term path?

*Figure 6.A: UK ODA Spending, 1960-2015*²⁴⁷



²⁴⁶ To put the expansion into context, UK spending on ODA in 1997 was around half of that contributed by France, which has a similar-sized economy. By 2013, the UK contributed one-and-a-half times the ODA that France did.

²⁴⁷ Data for Figure 6.A is from the OECD Query Wizard for International Development Statistics (QWIDS).

I argue in this chapter that aid policy change in the UK can be explained by the emergence of three interlocking and reinforcing aid salience shocks. Over time, the forces acted in concert, generating a virtuous cycle of commitment that propelled the UK towards achieving the 0.7% target. Following the pattern established in chapter 5, I tell this story in four ‘acts’. Overall, the narrative charts what I have called the ‘issue-ownership’ spiral—a unique political dynamic where the UK’s political commitment to the 0.7% target was ratcheted up over time as Labour and the Conservatives tried to ‘out do’ each other on aid as they competed to ‘own’ international development issues (see Table 6.A below).

Table 6.A: The International Development ‘Issue-Ownership Spiral’ Towards 0.7%, 1997-2013

Date	Issue Ownership ‘play’	Policy Commitment / Action
May 1997	Labour advance	DFID is established as an independent Ministry with its own Cabinet.
July 2004	Labour advance	Gordon Brown commits the UK to spending 0.7% of GNI on ODA by 2013.
July 2005	Labour advance	Labour reaffirms its commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI by 2013 at the G8 Summit at Gleneagles.
June 2006	Conservative response	David Cameron, as Opposition Leader, commits a future Conservative Government to achieving the 0.7% target by 2013.
Jan 2009	Conservative advance	David Cameron commits to ‘ringfencing’ the aid budget, despite calling for deep spending cuts elsewhere.
Sep 2009	Labour response	Gordon Brown promises to enshrine the 0.7% target in law in his speech at the 2009 Labour Party Conference.
Apr 2010	Conservative response	The Conservative Manifesto promises to enshrine the 0.7% target in law.
Mar 2013	Conservative advance	George Osborne confirms that the UK will achieve the 0.7% target in 2013.

I begin the chapter by documenting the emergence and impact of the Short aid salience shock, a direct (type I) aid salience shock named for Secretary of State for International Development Clare Short. This aid salience shock set in motion a series of path dependencies that played out over the ensuing decade, most importantly securing the status of the Department for International Development (DFID) and beginning an aid spending ramp up. Part two documents the Tory modernisation aid salience shock, an indirect (type II) aid salience shock that accompanied David Cameron’s elevation to the Conservative Party leadership in 2005 whereby the Tory commitment to 0.7% became a symbol of ‘Tory modernisation’. The next section charts the emergence of the complementary Cameron-Mitchell direct (type I) aid salience shock, named for Cameron and Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State for International Development from 2010-2012. The story reaches its climax in the chapter’s final section, where I demonstrate how the interaction of these three aid salience shocks produced an environment in which the 0.7% target was achieved, despite the presence of very strong countervailing political forces.

6.1 Foundations for 0.7%: Clare Short, DFID and New Labour

Clare Short was a total powerhouse. [Establishing DFID] was a visionary piece of engineering.

—Duncan Green, 2015²⁴⁸

In three years [Short] has transformed overseas development from a backwater, firmly in the grip of the Foreign Office, to an independent department, with its own (expanding) budget, pursuing its own agenda firmly focused on the poorest people in the poorest countries.

—Chris Mullin, 2001

Clare Short is the single most important reason that DFID has become the organisation it now is...

—Oliver Morrissey, 2002

The creation of the Department for International Development (DFID) was announced (Hall 2013, 230) on 3 June 1997, just 2 days after ‘New Labour’ was swept to power in the 1997 election²⁴⁹ under Tony Blair’s leadership²⁵⁰. Within several years, this new institution was widely considered the world’s leading development agency, a standing it maintains (Easterly and Williamson 2011). Much of the credit for this rapid transformation is apportioned to Clare Short, whom Blair appointed as Secretary of State for International Development. A striking feature of the interview research I conducted with those involved in contemporary UK aid policymaking was how, almost without exception, they would inevitably draw my attention to the ‘Short years’ when offering an explanation for why the UK was able to achieve the 0.7%.

²⁴⁸ Personal interview with Duncan Green, December 2015.

²⁴⁹ The Labour Party won 419 seats at the 1997 election, giving them a parliamentary majority of 177 (Pattie 2004, 17) and returning Labour to government for the first time eighteen years (Casey 2009, 1).

²⁵⁰ The establishment of DFID fulfilled Labour’s election promise to establish an independent development agency. It also extended a trend, unbroken since 1964, whereby under each successive Labour and Conservative governments, the agency responsible for administering aid would be afforded more or less autonomy respectively. Killick (2005, 670) provides an excellent overview of how the pendulum of administrative autonomy swung between Labour and the Conservatives between 1964 and 1997. “In essence,” summarises Killick (2005, 675), “Labour has stood for a relatively strong and independent aid ministry, the Conservatives for a weaker department formally located within the FCO.”

An appreciation of the lasting impact of Short's leadership is essential to understanding how future UK development policy decisions unfolded. This section of the chapter documents the impact of the Short salience spike. First, I show how Short's vision and personal drive was essential to establishing DFID's institutional identity within Whitehall. Second, I explain how Short ensured DFID was instilled with an independent policy identity. Finally, I foreshadow the lasting implications of these twin changes by describing how they 'locked-in' an elevated presence for development issues on the UK's political agenda, establishing path dependencies which ultimately led to achievement of the 0.7% target.

6.1.1 Clare Short and the emergence of DFID

As the epigraphs commencing this section suggest, Clare Short's role as a driving force in the establishment of DFID is readily acknowledged²⁵¹. Far less appreciated is how unlikely it was that Short found herself at the helm of the international development portfolio at in the first place. In a reshuffle of his shadow cabinet in 1996, Blair demoted Short from the Transport portfolio to shadow minister for international development. In her memoirs, Short (2005, 49) recalls feeling "stunned and angry" at this decision. Blair rang Short to try and calm her down, as did Blair's staff (Short 2005, 49; Campbell 2007, 128). But it was only after sitting down with her own staff that Short decided to accept the position²⁵². Once Short came to grips with the unexpected change of role, she characteristically threw herself into her new responsibilities.

A commitment to establishing a new department for international development was included in Labour's 1997 election manifesto. However, as Owen Barder (2007, 290) points out, this commitment had "hardened into party policy" without much discussion²⁵³. Yet once it became increasingly clear that Labour would win the forthcoming election, officials at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the department that stood to lose the most from the proposed reforms, began to lobby Blair and Robin Cook—then Shadow Foreign Secretary—to reverse the policy²⁵⁴. Blair evidently began doubting "the wisdom of the policy", and upon appointing Short

²⁵¹ My intention in drawing these epigraphs from an academic (Morrissey 2002, 23), a member of the UK development constituency (Green) and a politician (Mullin), is to demonstrate to extent to which Short is personally credited with establishing DFID. For more detailed accounts of Short's influence during this period, see Vereker (2002), Killick (2005) and Barder (2007).

²⁵² For a contemporary account of Short's demotion, see Murphy and Clare (1996).

²⁵³ Earlier in Blair's tenure as Opposition leader, a policy commission had been established to review the Labour Party's international policy. The Britain in the World Policy Commission was chaired by Robin Cook and, in formulating its recommendations relating to international development, responded to an emerging international aid reform agenda (Barder 2007, 290), which DFID would shortly become the standard bearer for. Most notably, the Commission "recommended the creation of a separate government department responsible for the broad range of international development issues across government..." (Barder 2007, 290).

²⁵⁴ Short (2007, 1) recalls how, in the six month period before the 1997 election, "the Foreign Office did their best to persuade both Blair and Cook that the commitment [to establish an independent international development agency] was a mistake." See also Short (2005, 51).

Shadow International Development Secretary, asked her to conduct a review “to look at the experience of other countries” (Short 2007, 1)²⁵⁵. During this period, Short engaged heavily with staff in DFID’s predecessor agency, the Overseas Development Administration—including its head, John Vereker, who would become DFID’s first permanent secretary—and agreed a roadmap for the new agency (Vereker 2002, 137)²⁵⁶.

By the time the election was held, Short was comfortable she had done enough to convince Blair that he should follow through on Labour’s promise to establish a new international development ministry²⁵⁷. On the other hand, she was less sure whether she would get the opportunity to lead it²⁵⁸. Following Labour’s landslide victory, the British media began to speculate about the shape of Blair’s first cabinet. Prior to the election, the media speculated that Short could be left out (Short 2005, 55). The very real possibility that somebody other than Short could be appointed Development Secretary (and indeed Shadow Development Secretary, as described above) invites active engagement with the counterfactual; what if somebody else had been appointed International Development Secretary? My conclusion is that, without Short’s presence, it would be extremely unlikely that DFID would enjoy the status, and indeed even the independence, it enjoys today. As with the progenitors of the two other direct (type I) aid salience shocks examined in this thesis—Rudd and Cameron—I found that Clare Short combined a strong desire to enact change in a particularly direction with a high capability for doing so. In this case, as I document below, Short married her strong personal belief that an independent agency was required to reduce global poverty with the requisite political skills and connections to fight for DFID’s independence.

Despite Labour explicitly introducing an ‘ethical dimension’ into British foreign policy (Wheeler and Dunne 1998, 2004; B. White 2013, 44)²⁵⁹, DFID was particularly vulnerable during the early period of its existence. As the Vereker (2002, 136) has acknowledged, “DFID threatened an order which had been established since 1979”. Only a few months after DFID’s establishment, the *Economist* (1997) reported that “two of the mightiest Whitehall departments [the FCO and Treasury] are trying to ensure [Short’s] new ministry is stillborn,” predicting that she would

²⁵⁵ In her memoirs, Short (2005, 51) records that “Tony asked me whether it was right that we should retain the commitment in our policy document to the establishment of a new Ministry for International Development headed by a Cabinet minister”. Short also reconfirmed this during my interview with her.

²⁵⁶ For more detail of Short’s activities during this period, see Vereker (2002) and Short (2005, 51–54).

²⁵⁷ Personal interview with Clare Short, December 2016.

²⁵⁸ Personal interview with Clare Short, December 2016.

²⁵⁹ Blair envisioned a role for Britain as a ‘pivotal power’ (Wheeler and Dunne 2004, 7), which maximised its influence by building on the strengths of its history and by developing new influence and building new alliances (Blair 1998). According to Short, the realisation that international development represented a domain in which Britain could exercise a pivotal role was only truly impressed upon Tony Blair and Gordon Brown a considerable time into Labour’s period in government. (See more at footnote 269).

“need all her indomitable spirit to keep it independent.” Short (2007, 1) recalls the Foreign Office being “profoundly hostile”, with DFID facing “a barrage of hostile press briefing” emanating from its erstwhile overseer²⁶⁰. The institutional animus between DFID and the FCO, particularly acute at the highest echelons of the FCO, was reflected in the testy personal relationship between Short and Foreign Secretary Robin Cook²⁶¹.

Short was uniquely equipped to weather the bureaucratic and political backlash to DFID’s establishment, for a number of reasons. First, Short’s appointment, because of who she was, afforded her new department an immediate status (Honeyman 2009b, 91). Short was an experienced politician known for her candour (Versi 1997; Richards 1997, 14). She had twice resigned from the Labour frontbench, in 1988 and again in 1991 (Wintour 1996; Richards 1997, 16) and had a penchant for “rugged honesty” (The Economist 1997) that endeared her Party’s grass-roots supporters (if not always its leaders²⁶²). Short, as Blair well knew when appointing her, would “play an activist role in exercising her responsibilities” (Young 2001, 247) as Secretary of State for International Development.

Second, Short was fully committed to DFID’s independence. Once she decided that “[o]nly a separate department has the authority to challenge policy across Whitehall” (Short 2007, 1)²⁶³, Short made it very clear she would actively “fight her Department’s corner” (Killick 2005, 676) to secure this objective²⁶⁴. Third, Short was fuelled by a unique type of political ambition. While determined “to make my new ministry an exemplary player” (Short 2005, 54), Short would not let herself become beholden to party leadership in the way many politicians do, as evidenced by her numerous cabinet resignations. Especially at this stage of her career, Short was unusually willing to ruffle the political feathers of powerful colleagues, not least Robin Cook. Fourth, Short

²⁶⁰ For an example of the animosity between DFID and the FCO during this period playing out in the press, see Valley (1997) and the discussion about this article in Richards (Richards 1997)

²⁶¹ The strained relations between DFID and the FCO, and Short and Cook, during the late 1990s and early 2000s are reflected in numerous published accounts of politicians, advisers and journalists active during this period. See, for example, Campbell Diaries (Campbell 2007, 57–59), Short’s own memoirs (Short 2005, 51) and various news reports, including from *The Economist* (1997), *New Statesman* (Richards 1997) and even *African Business* (Versi 1997). John Battle, who was Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs between 1999 and 2001 and later served on the International Development Selection Committee from 2001 to 2010, recalls regularly acting as an intermediary between Cook and Short during this period as a consequence of the pair’s disagreeableness (Personal Interview, October 2014).

²⁶² Short’s tendency to speak her mind partly explains Blair’s decision to demote her from Shadow Transport Secretary to international development.

²⁶³ This quote from Short refers is taken from reflections she published upon DFID’s tenth anniversary and refers to a key lesson she took on board during consultations with Overseas Development Administration (ODA) staff undertaken prior to the 1997 election.

²⁶⁴ Young (2001, 248) agrees that Short made it “clear from the outset that she would be both an initiator and a fighter”. For example, soon after taking office, Short declared; “[b]efore the elections, we said we would hammer poverty world-wide. Now that we have won, we’re going to do it. It can be done—mark my words” (Versi 1997, 6). Short herself repeatedly uses the language of battle when recounting this period in her memoirs (e.g. Short 2005, 78).

was well-versed in how the bureaucracy operated, having been a civil servant in the Home Office prior to entering politics (Young 2001). Moreover, Short's preparatory work with Vereker and other development specialists while in Opposition ensured she was well prepared upon entering Government²⁶⁵.

Fifth, Short was a "powerful advocate of development policy within the government" (Morrissey 2002, 1) and particularly inside cabinet (Dickie 2004, 226), where she proved capable of directly influencing cabinet decisions even in areas outside her portfolio²⁶⁶. Sixth, Short engendered extreme loyalty amongst her staff, helping to foster an attractive and enthusiastic culture within DFID. Blair, in his memoirs, recalls how "people just queued up to work in [DFID]" (Blair 2010, 24). Seventh, Short was a politician who had the ability to command attention and was capable of generating media attention for a low-profile issue. "As Secretary of State for International Development, Short may be at the bottom in terms of cabinet status," wrote Steve Richards (1997, 14) in a 1997 profile for *New Statesman*, "but measured by column inches in newspapers she competes with the big boys."

Yet even armed with this impressive array of qualities, Short would likely not have been capable of leading lasting change in Whitehall had she not enjoyed the active backing of the two dominant figures of the New Labour era; Blair²⁶⁷ and his long-time Chancellor of the Exchequer (and eventual successor), Gordon Brown. Blair and Brown²⁶⁸ shared (or at the very least, came to share²⁶⁹) Short's prioritisation of development. As Hulme (2009, 22) has pointed out, this meant Short "found herself in an unusual position, for an international development minister,

²⁶⁵ Vereker's account of this preparatory work, especially the eight-point plan that the pair agreed to implement (Vereker 2002, 137–38), demonstrates the extent of this effort and how deliberately the policy change was approached. For Short's account of DFID's establishment, see Short (Short 2005, 77–80)

²⁶⁶ Owen Barder (2005, 21) relays one particular incident where Short exerted her influence in Cabinet, despite the opposition of the Home Office and Downing Street advisers. Amidst a push to cut asylum numbers, Cabinet considered a Home Office proposal to make aid to some recipients "conditional on accepting the return of asylum seekers" (Barder 2005, 21). Short's arguments against the proposal, prosecuted both in cabinet and in the press, saw the proposal passed over.

²⁶⁷ Although often exasperated by Short's refusal to be constricted by the centrally controlled communications strategy overseen by Alistair Campbell (Seldon and Lodge 2011a, Loc 891; Campbell 2007, 128, 201), Blair was nonetheless indebted to Short for her early support when he became Labour leader. Short's status as a prominent left-winger who appealed to the party's grassroots members remained valuable to Blair once he became Prime Minister and helped him to present his cabinet as one that was ideologically diverse.

²⁶⁸ Brown's personal dedication to poverty reduction was such that advisers recognised this policy area as his 'hinterland', which he retired to when the pressures of governing burdened him (Seldon and Lodge 2011b, Loc 9241). Seldon and Lodge (2011b, Loc 1750), in their account of Brown's premiership, note that international development was "the topic most dear to his heart".

²⁶⁹ Short noted in her memoirs how Blair's interest in foreign policy was minimal before becoming leader of the Labour Party (Short 2005, 76), adding that "Blair's interest in development started to rise as he travelled and heard compliments for DfID's work" (Short 2005, 91). On the other hand, Short acknowledges that Brown "always had sympathy for development" but did not initially understand the ambition of DfID's agenda (Short 2005, 90). In my interview with her, Short essentially reiterated these positions.

of being treated as a budget priority rather than being placed at the back of the queue”²⁷⁰. The alliances Short enjoyed with Brown and Blair, based on their shared prioritisation of development, gave DFID a degree of political protection across Whitehall²⁷¹. Further helping Short was the fact Brown also had a difficult relationship with Robin Cook and “was suspicious of the FCO” (I. Hall 2013, 228).

While admitting that “[t]he going was rough in the early days”, Short was confident DFID’s institutional independence was secure after a couple of years (Short 2007). Short’s strong, purposeful and effective leadership, reinforced by the backing of Blair and Brown, was critical in rapidly establishing DFID’s place within Whitehall. Yet perhaps an even more important legacy of the Short aid salience shock was what this new Department stood for in policy terms. Short’s success in inuring DFID with a driving sense of purpose is the subject to which we now turn.

6.1.2 Poverty reduction: DFID’s *raison d’être*

In Oliver Morrissey’s view, the most important change in the first five years of DFID’s existence was its success in redefining the guiding purpose of aid (Morrissey 2002, 20). Vereker attributes much of DFID’s early success to the “power of a single, uncluttered purpose” (Vereker 2002, 140). Under Short’s leadership, poverty reduction became DFID’s *raison d’être* (Short 2005, 85). And because DFID understood its identity—“what it is for”, in Vereker’s (2002, 140) language—it was able to develop effective policies, motivate staff, and garner a profile within Whitehall and beyond. As Barder (2005, 3) notes, DFID’s reputation as global leader in development policy was secured extremely rapidly.

Short settled firmly on having poverty reduction as DFID’s overriding objective during her period as Shadow Minister, later explaining that:

“The reshaping of our development programme on the reduction of poverty might sound obvious, but there was such a muddle of motives and programmes in the international development system that the UK’s clarity of focus became influential and helped to lead to significant improvement in international development efforts” (Short 2005, 67).

To this end, a White Paper, titled *Eliminating World Poverty: A Challenge for the 21st Century*, was published in November 1997, barely six months following DFID’s formation (DFID 1997).

²⁷⁰ “It’s part of the secret of Clare’s success that she gets on so well with Gordon [Brown]”, noted Chris Mullin in his diary (Mullin 2009a, 184). Among the many other sources citing Short’s strong relationship with Brown include Keegan (2003, 295) and Dickie (2004, 226)

²⁷¹ This is not to suggest that DFID’s survival was by any means assured. Short (2007, 1) remembers DFID working “tenaciously across Whitehall at both official and Ministerial level to shift inherited attitudes.”

This was Britain's first white paper in 22 years²⁷² and, as its title clearly indicates, was designed to signal that the new Department's core mission was to reduce poverty (Killick 2005, 675)²⁷³.

The 1997 White Paper served notice that the UK's development assistance was now divorced from self-interested foreign policy or commercial objectives (The Economist 1999), not only in organisational terms but in policy terms as well. It is important to understand, however, that the impact of the latter change was facilitated by broader changes within in the international system²⁷⁴. As Vereker (2002, 134) acknowledged when reflecting on DFID's early success, "by the early 1990s the international development system was overdue for a fundamental change." The end of the Cold War had prompted a reappraisal of the role of aid and, by the middle of the decade, instead of asking "how best to use... [aid] budgets", development experts had started to wonder "what would have to happen to eliminate poverty" (Vereker 2002, 135). At times of flux in the international strategic order, and when international norms are shifting, the scope for individual agency is amplified (Schafer and Walker 2006, 5)²⁷⁵.

For this reason, a crucial enabler of the Short aid salience shock was that fact that "DFID came into existence at a time of considerable change in international thinking about development" (Barder 2005, 14). Upon becoming Minister, Short rapidly acquainted herself with the emerging development paradigm. Short was especially conscious of the "muddle of motives and programmes in the international development system" and her personality was such that she naturally sought to shape the agenda. The establishment of DFID provided Short with the platform, at precisely the right moment, to effect change. Under Short's leadership, the UK played a leading role in defining the dynamics of the new international development (Japan International Cooperation Agency, UK Office 2009), largely via supporting the emergence of the MDG's as the centre of gravity around which a reframed international aid regime developed²⁷⁶.

Short became enamoured with the International Development Targets, the predecessors to the MDGs, while still shadow Minister. Once in Government, Short "refocused the whole of [UK development] policy around the achievement of the International Development Targets" (Short 2007). "Short was looking for a device to focus DFID" agrees Hulme (2009, 23) and the

²⁷² The previous white paper, *Overseas Development: The Changing Emphasis in British Aid Policies: More Help for the Poorest*, had been published in 1975 by the Labour government of Harold Wilson (Killick 2005, 670).

²⁷³ For contemporary reviews of the 1997 White Paper, see Whaites (1998) and White (1998).

²⁷⁴ According to Killick (2005, 673), "the end of the Cold War [reduced] the weight attached to foreign policy considerations in British aid allocations".

²⁷⁵ Schafer and Walker (2006, 5) argue that the "role for beliefs is particularly likely when the environment is uncertain, that is, when information is scarce, ambiguous, contradictory, or so abundant that it is difficult for leaders to organize and process".

²⁷⁶ For a more detailed overview of Short's pivotal role in promoting the MDGs, see Hulme (2009).

International Development Targets were “exactly what she wanted”, especially as they also functioned to “mobilise public support in the UK and drive the international system forward.” (I explain this temporary rise in public support in a moment). During this period, Short collaborated closely with a group of likeminded development ministers known as the ‘Utstein Group’ (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme 2009, 8, 11; Vereker 2002, 136; Short 2005, 82–83). This group of four female development ministers²⁷⁷ functioned as norm entrepreneurs, “energetically us[ing] the IDGs to advocate increased aid commitments, reforms to make aid more effective and a refocusing of aid on human development and poverty reduction” (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme 2009, 11).

In December 2000, DFID published a second white paper—*Eliminating world poverty; making globalisation work for the poor* (DFID 2000). Short was instrumental in this process²⁷⁸. As indicated by its title, this policy document was self-consciously a sequel to the earlier White Paper. The Paper pushed DFID’s poverty reduction agenda forward and highlighted the importance of economic growth in achieving poverty reduction (Barder 2005, 15). Making globalisation ‘work for the poor’, argued the White Paper, entailed working collaborating to achieve results. It was this embrace of collaboration with others, according to Barder (2005, 16), that “helped DFID to become extremely influential throughout the development community after 1997.” This influence was pivotal in ensuring poverty reduction became the centrepiece of aid efforts in the MDG era.

A capstone to Short’s stewardship of DFID’s early life was the passing of International Development Act in 2002. This piece of legislation had been “foreshadowed in the 2000 White Paper” and “enshrined in law the single purpose of aid spending: every development assistance project or program must by law either further sustainable development or promote the welfare of people and be likely to contribute to the reduction of poverty” (Barder 2005, 17). In just five years, Short had not only fashioned a new ministry DFID around a single, uncluttered purpose, she had also managed to legislate that poverty reduction was its *raison d’être*.

²⁷⁷ The informal ‘Utstein Group’ was formed of Short (UK), Evelyn Herfkens (Netherlands), Hilde Johnson (Norway) and Heidemarie Wiczorek-Zeul (Germany) (Fukuda-Parr and Hulme 2009, 11)

²⁷⁸ Chris Mullin, who was Parliamentary Under-Secretary for DFID for six months in 2001, recorded in his diary that “[t]he recent White Paper on globalisation is written with beautiful clarity. Quite unlike any other I have seen. That’s mainly down to Clare, too. Apparently the early drafts were risible.” (Mullin 2009b, 163).

6.1.3 The Legacy of the Short Aid Salience Shock

In a January 1997 profile of Short for *The Observer*, journalist Lynn Barber observed of the freshly demoted Minister for Overseas Development that “[s]he must know that politically she is in a cul-de-sac, far removed from the core concerns of a Labour government-in-waiting.” (Barber 1997). By the time Short resigned from Labour’s front bench over Blair’s Iraq Policy six years later, on 12 May 2003, the Short aid salience shock had driven development issues firmly out of this political cul-de-sac and into the mainstream of New Labour priorities. Chris Mullin, who served briefly as Short’s deputy at DFID as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (the lowest ranking of government minister in the UK), agrees that Short had “succeeded in moving overseas aid up the political agenda” (2009b, 184).

Yet rather than ascending the political agenda as a result of bottom up, publicly driven demand, the prioritisation of development issues within the New Labour elite was primarily driven by the personal priorities of Short, empowered by the support of Brown and Blair. As I have illustrated above, to imagine to imagine such a strong platform being laid without Short’s leadership is very difficult. The diary entries recorded by Chris Mullin are remarkable in their praise of Short. At the end of his first month on the job as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for DFID, Mullin begins to “realise what a formidable politician Clare is” and notices the “real sense of loyalty” to her in DFID (Mullin 2009b, 163). A week later, Mullin wrote: “Clare in action is a sight to behold”, lamenting that “[w]atching her I feel so inadequate” (Mullin 2009b, 167)²⁷⁹.

Short’s leadership contributed to DFID prevailing in its bureaucratic turf war with the FCO²⁸⁰. The foremost demonstration of this was DFID’s success in securing funding increases in each of the 1998, 2000 and 2002 spending reviews—budgeting processes introduced by Labour to allocate spending limits for government agencies over future years overseen by the Treasury. By the 2000-01 financial year, DFID’s budget was almost two-and-a-half times the size of the FCO’s (HM Treasury 2000), thanks in part to Short’s relationship with Brown (Short 2005, 91). As Owen Barder (2005, 29) highlighted in his article documenting the reform lessons from

²⁷⁹ I heard a similar recollection from a former DFID official: “what Clare Short did was quite remarkable; the risks she took, the battles she fought, her own understanding of international development and what she wanted to do was quite astonishing.”

²⁸⁰ Whitman (2010, 838) has documented how “the FCO was seen to lose, in terms of influence and budget, to the Department for International Development (DFID)”. Likewise, Hall (2013, 241) concludes that, in relation to DFID and the Prime Minister’s office, the FCO “emerged from the New Labour era smaller, poorer, and marginalised, at least from high-level decision-making on major foreign policy issues. For an in-depth account of how these dynamics played out in the FCO during the early New Labour period is provided by John Dickie in his book *The New Mandarins: How British Foreign Policy Works* (Dickie 2004).

development policy in the UK, “it requires powerful political leadership to prevent aid budgets being diverted to other priorities”²⁸¹.

The political battles Short fought and won during this period have had lasting significance. As this chapter continues to unfold, it will become increasingly evident that the Short aid salience shock initiated and embedded institutional, policy and political path-dependencies that functioned as the platform from which future political decisionmakers were obliged to operate from, not least David Cameron. The Short aid salience shock also initiated the spending expansion that peaked with the achievement of 0.7%.

By the time of Short’s resignation from cabinet in May 2003 over the Government’s conduct of the Iraq War, the aid salience shock she created had pushed the UK’s development policy trajectory in a new direction firmly enough, and for long enough, that it would have been difficult to reverse, at least without a concerted effort. In any case, there was no appetite for such a reversal at the top of the New Labour hierarchy. In the years following Short’s departure from cabinet, Blair and Brown, despite being at loggerheads over almost every other aspect of government policy, were in agreement in prioritising development, in part because each saw it as personally politically beneficial (Harrison 2010, 400; Honeyman 2009b, 91).

Before concluding this discussion on the foundations that made 0.7% possible, I need to highlight the influence of the Make Poverty History (MPH) campaign. Alongside Short’s role, almost every interviewee I spoke with remarked on the importance of this campaign, especially its timing. The MPH campaign occurred at precisely the optimum time to further embed the policy trajectory established by the Short aid salience shock. MPH was a “broad-based campaign coalition” (Harrison 2010, 391) which formed in late 2003 and mobilised around the objective of making the G8 summit held in Gleneagles, Scotland, in July 2005, a “development summit” (Harrison 2010, 393)²⁸². From early 2004, “both Blair and Brown... engaged with the campaign, conceiving of it as a political resource and integrating it into their own political strategies”²⁸³. This political buy in helped spawn a suite of associated initiatives, including The Africa Commission (which would hand down its report at the Gleneagles summit and was often

²⁸¹ Short understood the political significance of DFID’s burgeoning budget, telling delegates to the 2000 Labour Party Conference in Brighton that DFID had secured a 50% increase in its budget since its inception, from 2.2 billion in 1997 to a promised 3.6 billion in 2003 (Short 2000).

²⁸² See Payne (2006) for an overview of the Gleneagles Summit from a development perspective.

²⁸³ For a detailed account of these dynamics, admittedly from an unapologetically pro-Brown perspective, see Chapter 22 of Brown’s special adviser Damian McBride’s memoirs (McBride 2014, 150–58). Although McBride details numerous instances of how he used development issues to enhance Brown’s image—including by leaking details of the Live 8 concert and surrounding his boss with celebrities—McBride insists that, ultimately, Brown’s “passion for international development issues was not some affectation to soften his image...” (McBride 2014, 150–51).

mistakenly referred to as the Blair Commission) and the Live 8 concert in London organised by Bob Geldof (which aligned with the twentieth anniversary of Live Aid, also organised and headlined by Geldof). These events, and the advocacy of ‘celebrity campaigners’, including Geldof, but also Bono and Richard Curtis (co-founder of Comic Relief with Lenny Henry), made 2005 “a vintage year for coverage of aid and development issues in the British media” (Moore and Unsworth 2006, 707; see also Nash 2008, 170; and McBride 2014, 156)²⁸⁴.

MPH marked the point at which UK development policy crossed-over from being an inside-Whitehall issue to something capable of piquing the general public’s interest. Across each of the countries examined in this thesis, MPH is undoubtedly the point at which development policy came closest to crossing into the realm of achieving issue salience. Follow up research revealed that “[n]early 90% of the public were aware of MPH in July 2005” (Darnton 2006, 6)—a remarkable level. Yet even if it aid policy did momentarily breach the threshold at which political decisionmakers were somewhat politically incentivised to pay attention to international development issues on their own merits, this point was short-lived.

Follow up public opinion research carried out by Andrew Darton (2006, 5) found some members of the public who participated in MPH activities rapidly forgot they participated. This research also demonstrated that “few people understand what MPH was, what it was about, or who was behind it” (Darnton 2006, 9). Harrison (2010, 391) contends that, “in retrospect, MPH was not a straightforward success: it is generally recognized that the goals of the campaign (never fully clear) were not achieved; there existed significant tensions within the coalition; and the legacy of MPH has proved to be rather slender.”

While MPH has a complicated legacy (Harrison 2010; Nash 2008) and its direct impact on public opinion on development in the UK is difficult to assess²⁸⁵, a key finding from subsequent research is that “a vast amount of effort was required to deliver relatively small shifts in public perceptions” (Darnton 2006, 10–11). MPH therefore represents compelling evidence that aid issues are extremely unlikely, on their own, to cross the aid salience threshold via a rise in issue salience. To get on the political agenda, aid issues require a powerful individual actor to put them there. This is why it was especially notable that David Cameron was among the more recognisable figures amongst the 200,000-strong crowd attending Live 8 in Hyde Park in July

²⁸⁴ In its peer review of the UK aid program published in early 2006, the OECD DAC reported that “[t]it is widely felt that UK development co-operation is at an historic high point of political and public support” (OECD DAC 2006a, 11).

²⁸⁵ As Andrew Darnton (2006, 10), who is one of the UK’s foremost experts on public opinion and aid, has argued, “[m]aking a direct causal link between MPH and public perceptions of poverty is especially difficult given the amount of related activity and media ‘noise’ around the G8 Summit in 2005”

2005 (Cameron 2011b; Wintour 2011). Three months later, he was elected the leader of the Conservative Party. In documenting the story of the UK's journey to 0.7%, our next step is to examine the impact of Cameron's leadership on aid policy.

§§§

6.2 Towards Consensus on 0.7%: International Development and Tory Modernisation

I want people to feel good about being a Conservative again.

—David Cameron, 4 October 2005

Conservatives used to regard [global poverty] as a second-order subject.

—David Cameron, 29 June 2006

David Cameron's election as leader of the Conservative Party in 2005 was a critical juncture in the UK's journey to achieving the 0.7%. While Cameron was personally committed to increasing aid spending (as I make clear below, in subsection 6.3.1), in this section I explain how Cameron's elevation to the party leadership saw the Conservatives embrace a modernising agenda to a far greater extent than would have been the case had another leader been elected and the implications of this for aid spending. Cameron's 'modernisation project'—a political strategy designed to detoxify the 'Tory brand' and thus broaden the Conservative Party's appeal in response to New Labour's electoral dominance—elevated the relevance and importance international development policy for Cameron and the modernisers. Under Cameron, demonstrating a commitment to international development became one of the key ways that the new Tory leadership attempted to demonstrate that the Conservative party had changed. The 'Tory modernisation' aid salience shock emerged because the commitment to 0.7% helped the Conservatives shed the 'nasty party' gained under former Conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

In documenting the ‘Tory modernisation’ aid salience shock, this section of the chapter begins with an account of Cameron’s ascension to the Tory leadership in 2005. Here I demonstrate that, had Cameron not unexpectedly been elected leader, the strategic direction the Conservative Party embarked upon would have been much different. I then demonstrate the way in which a focus on international development served as a key pillar of Cameron’s ‘modernisation project’. In the final subsection, I chart how Cameron’s controversial trip to Rwanda in the summer of 2007 hastened the end of what scholars have identified as the ‘high period’ of this period of Tory modernisation. I argue that Cameron’s continued prioritisation of international development issues is an indicator of after his personal commitment to the 0.7% target.

6.2.1 David Cameron: ‘reform candidate’

David Cameron’s ascension to the Tory leadership is a classic example of a change in the political agenda resulting “from a change in party control... brought about by elections” (Kingdon 1995, 16). In order to be granted ‘permission to be heard’ (Bale 2008a, 277), Cameron emphasised policies that simultaneously marked his as a ‘modern Conservative’, differentiated the Conservatives from their Thatcherite past (Heppell and Seawright 2012, 227; Kerr 2007, 49) and encroached onto policy territory ‘owned’ by Labour (Bale 2008a, 273; Kavanagh and Cowley 2010, 79), including international development. The political logic behind Cameron’s modernisation drive was to “‘detoxify’ the Conservative brand so that the electorate would once again give the party serious consideration as a party of government” (Hayton 2012, 142). Examining the internal Conservative party politics from this period illustrates serves to illustrate the extent to which the identity of the individual who prevails in these political contests determines the degree of attention international development issues receive.

The Conservative Party leadership election that culminated in Cameron’s ascension took place against a backdrop of internal debate over the future direction of the party. After three consecutive electoral defeats to Tony Blair’s ‘New Labour’, the imperative for the party to reform their image was undeniable (J. Green 2010, 668–69). In what was intended as a post-election wake-up call to his party, Lord Ashcroft, published *Smell the Coffee*, a collation of polling data that made it clear that “[t]he Conservative Party’s problem is its brand” (Ashcroft 2005, 4). Yet while there was broad agreement that there was a problem, there was genuine split in about how to rectify it (J. Green 2010, 669). In short, the party was grappling with its identity (Kerr and Hayton 2015, 117).

In practice, the real question the Tories faced was not whether to ‘modernise’, but the extent which the party should ‘modernise’²⁸⁶. In response to this question, the Conservative Party split into two broad camps. Traditionalists emphasised traditional Tory values and were relatively comfortable building on the Thatcherite legacy. Modernisers, on the other hand, envisioned a more wholesale transformation, seeking to actively de-emphasise “the issues it traditionally ‘owns’” (Bale 2008a, 3). This split into traditionalists and modernisers was not a new phenomenon; membership in these groups correlated closely with the more familiar cleavage in the party around the right wingers and centrists (a factional divide very similar to that in the Australia’s Liberal Party and discussed earlier in section 5.4).

When Michael Howard announced his intention to step down after leading the Conservatives to defeat in the 2005 general election, David Davis—Howard’s shadow Home Secretary—was the strong favourite to replace him²⁸⁷. Other contenders were Kenneth Clarke, who had held various positions in Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s cabinet and served as Chancellor of the Exchequer in John Major’s government, and Liam Fox, a right-winger who had served as Chairman of the Conservative Party during Howard’s leadership. In contrast to these frontrunners, Cameron was widely considered too young and inexperienced for the job (Dorey, Garnett, and Denham 2011, 58)²⁸⁸. Yet once Cameron seriously committed to contesting the leadership, he turned his youth into an advantage, running as the change candidate who was capable of reenergising and reinventing the Conservative Party. “I want people to feel good about being a conservative again”, Cameron (2005a) declared at the Conservative Party Conference in October 2005, during a speech that played a key role in generating momentum for his eventual victory.

When Clarke and then Fox were eliminated from the in the first²⁸⁹ and second²⁹⁰ rounds of the leadership contest, respectively, the race crystallised as a referendum on the future direction of the Conservative Party and its comfort with the contrasting options before it. Davis represented incremental reform. Cameron promised a more fundamental transformation. Helped by a slick

²⁸⁶ The term ‘modernising’ is notoriously elusive to define—one of the reasons it is embraced by politicians. As Byrne, Foster and Kerr (2012, 23) point out “modernisation is one of those rare political terms which manages to appear to be a credible basis for a governing strategy, but which is also sufficiently vague so as to be able to man almost anything.”

²⁸⁷ This paragraph draws on the following accounts of the 2005 Conservative Party leadership election: Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, chapter 20), Elliott and Hanning (2009, chapter 15) and Jane Green (2010, 669–71).

²⁸⁸ Cameron was just 38 years old and had only served one term as an MP at the point Howard announced his intention to step down—factors that led Cameron himself to question the wisdom of entering the race.

²⁸⁹ The Parliamentary Party voted on the first round on Tuesday 18 October 2005, with results as follows: Cameron (56 votes), Clarke (38), Davis (62), and Fox (42).

²⁹⁰ The second round of Parliamentary Party voting was held on Thursday 20 October 2005, with Cameron (90 votes) beating Davis (57) and Fox (51).

and well-organised campaign, which amplified the notion that Cameron himself personified the idea of ‘new conservative’ (Bale 2016, Loc. 7069). Cameron was elected Leader of the Conservative Party on the 6 December 2005. In his acceptance speech, Cameron (2005b) promised to deliver a “modern compassionate Conservatism that is right for our times and right for our country.”

During the ‘high period’ of modernisation (roughly coinciding with the first eighteen months of his leadership), Cameron’s focus on the environment was the most high profile and symbolic of these policy issues. Photos of Cameron posing with huskies while visiting a glacier in the Arctic Circle to raise awareness about climate change are widely remembered as defining images of this period of Cameronism (Heppell 2012, 224)²⁹¹. Other elements of this environmental makeover included redesigning the Conservative Party logo from the “Torch of Liberty” to a “breezy blue-trunked, green-leaved oak tree” (Bale 2016, Loc 7481) and adopting a new campaign slogan—‘Vote Blue, Go Green’. While international development was a highly visible element of Cameron’s modernisation, the scholarly literature has paid scant attention to the nature and role of international development policy in Cameron’s modernisation project²⁹². Even assessments of Cameron’s approach to foreign policy pay relatively little attention to development (e.g. Honeyman 2009a, 2012). The next two subsections begin to atone for this curious shortcoming in the literature.

6.2.2 International Development as a pillar of Cameron’s Modernisation Project

Cameron wasted little time in demonstrating his intent to make a focus on international development a pillar of his modernisation strategy. On 28 December, just three weeks after becoming leader, Cameron announced the formation of the Globalisation and Global Poverty Policy Group (GGPPG), one of six policy groups that Cameron commissioned in priority areas. This policy renewal process, overseen by Oliver Letwin, was designed to inform the next Conservative manifesto (Cameron 2005c), but served a variety of useful purposes, not least

²⁹¹ For an assessment of the role of environmental policy in modernisation, see Carter and Clements (2015) and Connelly (2009a).

²⁹² Cameron’s modernisation project is the subject of a large and growing literature (Heppell 2013, 340). Accounts of Cameron’s modernising project include those by Heppell (2012), d’Ancona (2013b), Elliott and Hanning (2009, 298–361) and Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, Part Four). For a comprehensive recent retrospective of Cameron-era Tory modernisation, see the 2015 special issue of *British Politics* (Volume 10, Issue 2). Numerous scholars have contemplated the degree to which the modernisation of the Tories under Cameron exhibited continuity with previous Conservative repositioning efforts (S. Evans 2008; Dorey and Garnett 2012). Others have noted how Cameron’s approach exhibited many similarities with Blair’s ‘Third Way’ strategy during New Labour’s own modernising approach implemented a decade earlier (Heppell and Lightfoot 2012, 133; McAnulla 2010; Kavanagh and Cowley 2010, 79; Kerr 2007). The role of international development in Tory modernisation, however, is surprisingly neglected. The work of Dunne, Hall-Matthews and Lightfoot (2011), Heppell and Lightfoot (2012) and Mawdsley (2015) are notable exceptions.

demonstrating to the electorate that, under Cameron, “every inherited policy position was up for renegotiation” (S. Evans 2008, 296). It reinforced the notion that Cameron was leading an intellectual renewal of Conservatism, providing him with regular opportunities to talk about his vision of a modern conservatism (Cameron 2006a, 2006b). It also meaningfully engaged senior party figures who had been overlooked for shadow cabinet positions—including former leaders—in his modernisation project (Kavanagh and Cowley 2010, 75).

Cameron tapped Peter Lilley to chair the GGPPG. While Lilley’s status as a former Deputy Leader of the party, alongside his professional background working in international development, clearly commended him to the role, a decisive factor in Cameron’s choice to appoint Lilley was his status as a prominent right-winger—a reality Lilley opening acknowledged when I asked him about it²⁹³. While Lilley’s leadership of the group would prove much more important in the long term (as we will see), press coverage of the establishment of the GGPPG was dominated, as Cameron and his advisers undoubtedly intended it to be, by the coup of securing the involvement of the rock star and iconic anti-poverty campaigner Sir Bob Geldof²⁹⁴.

Tim Bale characterises Geldof’s involvement as a ‘brand signifier’: “[h]is involvement suggested that Cameron’s Conservatives (as the Party’s instantly revamped website now billed them) weren’t the same old Tories” (Bale, Loc 7054). Geldof’s recruitment was an ‘announceable’ capable of cutting through with ordinary voters, instantly building the credibility of the Conservatives on a policy issue that was seen as ‘owned’ by Labour (McAnulla 2010: 295). Bob Geldof was synonymous with the Make Poverty History campaign in 2005, just as he had been with Live Aid a generation earlier²⁹⁵. In securing Geldof’s participation in the GGPPG, Cameron symbolically connected the Conservatives to the Make Poverty History movement and, by extension, the 0.7% target.

Focusing on international development issues gave Cameron an opportunity to “demonstrate both his connection with contemporary society and his concern with social issues” (Hayton 2012, 142). In particular, the demographic most engaged in the campaign to tackle global poverty—

²⁹³ When I asked Lilley if he was surprised by the appointment, he responded: “It didn’t occur to me that [Cameron] would invite me to chair [the GGPPG], but when he did—I was probably the only conservative who had ever worked professionally in the development business—it seemed quite a logical choice.” When I enquired as to whether his being on the right wing of the party was a factor, Lilley acknowledged that

²⁹⁴ To maximise media coverage of his appointment, Geldof’s involvement was announced in a post-Christmas media lull and following the pre-Christmas “blizzard of announcements and blaze of publicity” accompanying Cameron’s election (Bale 2016 Loc 7054). ‘Geldof helps Tory poverty policy’ (BBC 2005) was an example of the headlines it generated.

²⁹⁵ “Geldof’s public profile and his popularity with the media”, argues Harrison (2010, 404), “lent him an immense presence in 2005”. Focus group research found that the most common “‘top of mind’ associations from MPH were the links between MPH and Live8 concerts and Bob Geldof (Darnton 2006, 9).

broadly young people, but especially women and those who tended to be socially active—was a demographic the new Conservatives were conscious they needed to reach. Cameron reinforced the Conservative Party's support of the Make Poverty History movement in *Built to Last* (Conservative Party 2006), a statement of his aims and values launched in February 2006 (Cameron 2006c)²⁹⁶. The section of *Built to Last* titled 'What we're fighting for', included this resolution: "[t]t is our moral obligation to make poverty history" (Conservative Party 2006, 5).

Cameron's speech at Oxford University on 'Fighting Global Poverty', delivered in June 2006, remains his defining speech on international development. The speech is remarkable not just for its bold policy stance but for the fact that each of the policy commitments Cameron announced were ultimately delivered upon once he became Prime Minister. Cameron (2006d) began by acknowledging that the "Conservatives used to regard [global poverty] as a significant, but second-order subject." From the outset, it was clear that the purpose of this speech was to demonstrate how, under Cameron, international development was now a first order issue for his new Conservatives. Cameron reasserted his claim that global poverty was "first and foremost" a "moral challenge", while noting that the provision of international development was also a "question of hard-headed political and economic reality... a question of enlightened self-interest."

Cameron's Oxford speech is a prime example of a common tactic deployed by Cameron during his early modernising period, whereby the Conservatives sought to establish credibility on issues dominated by political opponents by explicitly adopting their policy positions (Heppell and Lightfoot 2012, 132). Rather than point out failings in existing international development policy, Cameron instead acknowledged the "personal commitment and leadership of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown" in raising the significance of global poverty issues. Cameron then moved to cover off a trio policy positions that what were seen as crucial differentiators of Labour's international policy by committing his party to: "achieving the target of spending 0.7% of national income on aid by 2013"; keeping DFID as an independent department; and maintaining the existing approach on tied aid (the later commitment functioning, in reality, as a proxy for an approach to development spending that prioritised poverty reduction).

These three key crucial policy issues remained those that international development activists feared a Conservative Government would most likely abandon. And while activists, in particular, may not have trusted Cameron, or believed he would be capable of resisting the strong anti-aid

²⁹⁶ "It is morally unacceptable" argued Cameron (2006d) "for billions of people to live in dire and degrading poverty when we now know the secret of wealth creation."

sentiment on the right of his Party over the long term, his speech meant that there could be no disputing that, on paper at least, there was little between the headline development policy positions of Labour and the Tories. Mitchell made a point of emphasising this new reality at the 2006 Party conference, held three months after Cameron's Oxford speech. "You know, there are some who say this is a Labour issue" acknowledged Mitchell (2006). "But I say that international development is not a Labour issue or a Conservative issue but a British issue". By now, Cameron and Mitchell's political strategy was clear; they were intent on wresting issue ownership of international development back from Labour.

6.2.3 *International Development Survives the Tory 'Rebalancing'*

In the northern spring of 2007, Andrew Mitchell sent letters to Conservative MPs inviting them to participate in Project Umubano²⁹⁷, a new social action program in Rwanda (Kite 2007a). Tory volunteers would travel to Africa at their own expense for two weeks over summer in order to contribute to a variety of development projects. Coming after the GGPPG and Cameron and Mitchell's policy pronouncements, Umubano represented a more tangible, grassroots-orientated manifestation of the emerging Conservative approach to international development issues. Over time, the influence of Umubano would prove decisive in developing and connected a cadre of Tory supporters of international development (a phenomenon I examine in more detail below during subsection 6.3.2). In early 2007, however, prospective Tory volunteers were encouraged to journey to Africa by the news that Cameron would also be participating, and was planning to use the trip as a backdrop to launch the GGPPG's report.

As Cameron's trip to Rwanda approached, however, the political headwinds he had navigated with considerable success to this point intensified significantly. The Conservative base had never been comfortable with his modernisation program, but were happy to go along with it so long as Cameron's leadership seemed likely to pay electoral dividends. Yet now, after an 18-month extended 'honeymoon' (Dale 2007) a series of political setbacks intensified discontentment with Cameron amongst the Tory right-wing (Bale 2016, Loc 8066), forcing him to reconsider the scope and shape of his modernising project.

First, in May, Cameron had to weather the 'grammar gate' controversy²⁹⁸. Soon after, the Conservative MP Quentin Davies defected to Labour (Elliott and Hanning 2009, 317). In the

²⁹⁷ Project Umubano was named after the kinyarwanda word for friendship.

²⁹⁸ This controversy erupted in May, after Shadow education secretary David Willetts gave a speech in which he said the Tories would not open any new grammar (i.e. selective) schools, a stance which infuriated a number of senior Tory MPs (Wilson 2007). For a detailed discussion of this controversy, see Bale (2016, chapter 10.2).

resignation letter he gave Cameron and subsequently posted on *ConservativeHome*, Davies wrote “[u]nder your leadership the Conservative Party appears to me to have ceased collectively to believe in anything, or to stand for anything” (Q. Davies 2007), adding that he thought Cameron’s “superficiality, unreliability and apparent lack of any clear convictions” disqualified him from leadership. Davies’ action was damaging not so much for the defection itself, but for the fact that it again brought to the fore the question of Cameron’s motivations: was his commitment to modernisation genuine or was it merely political expediency?

Then, in late June, Gordon Brown became Prime Minister after Tony Blair resigned. The polling honeymoon that resulted for Labour raised the prospects of a snap election (Elliott and Hanning 2009, 321; d’Ancona 2013b, 17), piling further pressure on Cameron. In late July 2007, the Conservatives placed third (in each case behind Labour and the Liberal Democrats) in two by-elections (Watt and Revill 2007) that were held just days before Cameron was scheduled to jet off to Rwanda to launch the GGPPG report. The day Cameron was due to depart, the Sunday papers carried stories that a number of Tory MPs were seeking to initiate a no-confidence vote in their leader (Elliott and Hanning 2009, 319; Watt and Revill 2007).

Clearly, Cameron’s involvement in Project Umubano came at a challenging political moment for the Tory leader. And that was before Cameron’s constituency was suddenly hit by flooding which inundated 3000 homes in Witney, the largest town in Cameron’s eponymously-named electorate. Cameron managed to tour his electorate just hours ahead of his scheduled departure overseas, yet evidence for this visit was not captured by the broadcast photographers, meaning there would be no pictures on the evening news to prove Cameron’s presence in his electorate. This exacerbated the political conundrum facing Cameron and his advisers²⁹⁹: if Cameron went to Africa “he would be portrayed as abandoning his core supporters for the sake of a cynical media stunt” (Elliott and Hanning 2009, 321); if he stayed it would reinforce the widespread suspicion that Cameron (lacked conviction and would readily discard his professed commitment to international development (in particular) and modernisation (in general) once there was any real political pain to endure. Cameron’s inner circle of advisers was genuinely split on the action their boss should take and, according to some accounts, remain so today³⁰⁰.

²⁹⁹ As the journalist Melissa Kite (2007b) quote one ‘senior aide’ to Cameron as saying, “if he goes to Rwanda it’s a stunt. If he cancels Rwanda to stay at home because of the floods it’s a stunt. He can’t win. That is the problem he has got to deal with.”

³⁰⁰ According to multiple sources, Cameron’s aides remain split on this issue to this day (Elliott and Hanning 2009, 321; Seldon and Snowden 2015, Loc 5879).

Ultimately Cameron decided to go to Rwanda. In response to Dylan Jones' question asking why he was still going, Cameron responded: "Because I think it's a good idea. Because I think it's the right thing to do... I think it is absolutely true that international poverty is a mainstream issue..." (Cameron in D. Jones 2010, 87). Before departing, Cameron insisted that he would not "retreat to the comfort zone" (Bale 2016, Loc 8057). On the other hand, the populist press didn't think the trip was such a good idea. "Cam deserts Brit victims" headlined the *Star* on 24 July (Bale 2016 Loc 8057)—the day Cameron (2007) launched the GGPPG report in the Rwandan Parliament alongside Mitchell, a handful of other MPs, and Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Peter Lilley conducted a simultaneous launch in London (Lilley 2007).

The timing and circumstances of the Rwanda meant it became a lightning rod moment for those with reservations about Cameron's electoral strategy and of his Modernisation project itself (Watt and Revill 2007; Kite 2007b). Ann Widdecombe, a long-serving MP from the right of the Conservative Party who criticised Cameron publicly for his decision to go to Rwanda, spoke for many in the party when she offered this assessment to the *Daily Mail*: "[Cameron] has been very successful in getting support from people who previously would not have looked at us. But he must now pay a great deal of attention to shoring up our traditional vote" (Walters 2007). Cameron and his advisers took heed. The summer of 2007 is widely recognised as an inflexion point of Cameron's modernisation project³⁰¹. From this point, a self-conscious 'rebalancing' began to take place with previously downplayed issues such as crime, immigration and tax reform suddenly appearing on the agenda (Elliott and Hanning 2009, 322).

Cameron's decision to go to Rwanda, despite how clearly fraught it was politically, was routinely cited by individuals I spoke with as evidence of Cameron's personal commitment to development. For them, it signalled Cameron's willingness to defy public opinion, the press and unsupportive elements in the Conservative Party. Despite delivering Cameron "his first serious taste of adverse publicity on his development priority" (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 7845), he refused to allow it to prevent him from keeping this issue on the political agenda. The question is why not? Part of the explanation is that, by now, development had become one of the "signature issues pushed by David Cameron in [his] bid to 'detoxify' the Tory brand" (Alex Evans 2013). Yet plainly this cannot be the only reason, as other symbols of Tory repositioning, most notably the focus on the environment, also functioned as symbols of Tory repositioning, and these gradually faded from view from this point. Why did international development not also fall by the wayside? My answer is that the Tory commitment to the 0.7% target was more

³⁰¹ For accounts of the politics of this 'inflection period' see Bale (2008b, 2016, chapter 10.3) and Elliott and Hanning (2009, chapter 16).

than just a symbolic gesture. As I move to argue in the next section, Cameron and Mitchell were both deeply personally committed to seeing the 0.7% target realised.

§§§

6.3 Building for 0.7%: The Issue-ownership Spiral Gathers Momentum

It's a personal priority for me...

—David Cameron (referring to international development), 2006.

It's really insulting to say this [commitment to International Development] is just about detoxifying the Conservative Party.

—Andrew Mitchell, 2012³⁰².

The great success, which isn't understood, is that we have turned development now into a centre-right issue...

—Andrew Mitchell, 2014³⁰³.

In this section, I show how the personal commitment of David Cameron and Andrew Mitchell to international development and the 0.7% target was central to the story of the UK's aid spending expansion. I demonstrate how Cameron and Mitchell prioritised aid policy and kept it on the political agenda. And I document how both men actively and repeatedly intervened in aid policy decisionmaking to further their shared aid policy objectives. My priority, in carrying out these tasks, is to convey how a confluence of forces were working together at this time to 'push' the UK towards the 0.7% target. The momentum generated by the Cameron-Mitchell direct (type I) aid salience shock towards the 0.7% target reinforces the momentum supplied by the Tory modernisation aid salience shock. And as we will see, this generates a response from Labour,

³⁰² Quoted in Behr (2012).

³⁰³ Personal Interview, October 2014.

eager to demonstrate they still maintain ‘issue ownership’ of aid policy. In short, this section charts a ratcheting up of the issue-ownership spiral that formed in the UK around aid policy.

In the first subsection below, I supply evidence that Cameron and Mitchell’s personal commitment to international development is genuine. I then move to demonstrate how this personal commitment was powerfully manifested in a commitment to building pro-development institutions and structures within the Conservative Party. Finally, the third subsection documents the decisionmaking episode resulting in the 2009 White Paper—Labour’s most definitive response to ongoing Tory efforts to ‘own’ the international development issue area.

6.3.1 *The Cameron-Mitchell Aid Salience Shock*

In this subsection, I present four key ‘clusters’ of evidence to support the argument that David Cameron and Andrew Mitchell paid sustained attention to aid policy issues because they both genuinely cared about aid issues and reaching the 0.7% target. The first cluster of evidence to examine is the public statements made by these men. Cameron concluded his first major address on international development issues—his ‘Fighting Global Poverty’ speech at Oxford—by assuring his listeners that international development “is my personal priority” (Cameron 2006d). “I believe that effective aid is essential for economic empowerment,” Cameron (2006d) explained, “and that is why a Conservative government would spend more on aid”. A decade later, in a short farewell speech upon leaving Number 10 in July 2016, Cameron cited the “decision to keep our aid promises to the poorest people and the poorest countries” as a key achievement of his Government (Cameron 2016). In the decade in-between these speeches, while Cameron was Tory leader, he regularly and repeatedly voiced his commitment to reducing poverty and achieving the 0.7% target including to his own ‘tribe’ at Conservative Party Conferences³⁰⁴. (I return to this in more detail below, during subsection 6.4.2).

Mitchell, for his part, regularly proclaimed his good fortune that, in giving him charge over the international development portfolio in Opposition and in Government, Cameron saved him the best and most exiting job in cabinet (A. Mitchell 2006, 2010b; Sparrow 2012). Reflecting on his political career to date in a public forum in late 2015, Mitchell (2015b, 7) recalled the role of Secretary of State for International Development as the “job of my dreams”. Mitchell also

³⁰⁴ Interview with Andrew Palmer, November 2016. In a typical declaration made during the Leader’s speech at the Conservative Party Conference in 2009, Cameron (2009d) declared that he was “proud that we’ve ring-fenced the budget for international development”.

acknowledged regretting relinquishing the role³⁰⁵—Cameron appointed him as Chief Whip in a reshuffle in 2012—but explained how his passion for the issue remained undiminished: “I feel passionately about international development and about doing something to end these colossal discrepancies of opportunity and wealth, which exist in our world today and disfigure it (Mitchell 2015).” Following his tenure as Development Secretary, Mitchell has remained an active advocate, publishing position papers (A. Mitchell 2013, 2014), contributing numerous op-eds (e.g. A. Mitchell 2015c, 2016) and giving countless talks on development policy issues. He also remains heavily involved in Project Umubano and is a Patron of the Conservative Friends of International Development (key party institutions which I discuss further below, in subsection 6.3.2, below).

The second cluster of evidence concerns the testimony of close associates and observers of Cameron and Mitchell about the source of their motivation. Seldon and Snowden’s book detailing Cameron’s premiership concludes that the 0.7% target was “a cause close to the prime minister’s heart” (Seldon and Snowden 2015, Loc 4246), a conclusion that is significant given that this account is distinguished by the level of access the authors had to insiders³⁰⁶. “One of the rare issues on which Cameron will lose his temper” Snowden and Seldon (2015, Loc 7845) quote one aide as saying, “is if they try challenging him over development spending.” Even political opponents who considered Cameron to be a politically expedient chameleon begrudgingly acknowledged his consistent prioritisation of international development³⁰⁷. Mitchell’s passion for the international development brief has been noted in various profiles (Sparrow 2012; Watt and Wintour 2010; Behr 2012)³⁰⁸ and is widely acknowledged within the development constituency. For example, Simon Maxwell, the Director of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) during Mitchell’s time as Shadow Secretary of State, does not doubt that Mitchell is “somebody who actually does believe in development”³⁰⁹.

A third source of evidence concerns how Cameron and Mitchell enjoyed a highly effective partnership over a long period based on their shared beliefs on international development.

³⁰⁵ During this forum, at the UK Institute for Government, Mitchell (2015b, 3) stated that Chief Whip was “not a job I wanted” and that he told Cameron “I wasn’t the right person”, but nonetheless “out of loyalty to the Prime Minister and because I think on the whole you should do what you’ve asked by the Prime Minister if you possibly can, I agreed to move.”

³⁰⁶ *Cameron at 10* is based on over 300 interviews, including with the most senior members of Government and Cameron’s staff.

³⁰⁷ Consider these comments from Lord Lipsey (n.d., Column 1648), offered during a debate in the House of Lords: “Mr Cameron was—how shall I put this in “lordly” language?—not known for his strong beliefs. But one belief that he did adhere to was giving a higher priority to aid”.

³⁰⁸ The journalist Andrew Sparrow (2012), in a preface to an interview with Mitchell published in 2012, observed that “he’s obviously quite passionate about his job.”

³⁰⁹ Personal interview with Simon Maxwell, November 2014. See also Evans (2012).

During the 2005 leadership election, Mitchell had run the leadership campaign of David Davis, Cameron's chief opponent. As Mitchell acknowledged to me in an interview in October 2014, this meant that:

[I]t wasn't always written in the stars that [Cameron] and I would get on particularly well; [Cameron] could well have had a bit of a grievance. The thing was that we absolutely shared the same view on international development – completely. And that was a sort of bonding exercise, really.

This comment naturally leads to a consideration of the following counterfactual: would the trajectory of UK development policy have been different if Davis emerged as Tory leader in 2006, rather than Cameron? Mitchell was Davis' campaign manager during the 2006 leadership election, making him very well placed to assess this hypothetical. When I posed this question to Mitchell, he offered a measured but instructive response. "David Davis understands why international development is so important, but I think David Davis would agree that his commitment was less strong than David Cameron's..."³¹⁰

Mitchell's comment serves to reinforce the central argument of this thesis; that the priorities of individual political leaders are crucial in determining whether international development reaches the political agenda. This is especially likely to be the case in the Conservative party, a top-down organisation where a change of leadership is akin to a regime change (Bale 2016, Loc 837)³¹¹. Once elected party leader, Cameron possessed some leeway in realigning the party's political agenda to reflect his own, as long as he was "seen as a winner" (Bale 2016, Loc 859). And because international development had high decider salience for Cameron, this issue featured on the Conservative's policy agenda.

A fourth reason to believe that Cameron's and Mitchell's consistent support for international development issues derived from a legitimate personal commitment, is because it is very difficult to explain their positions as a product of pure political expediency. Numerous insiders I spoke with remain baffled as to why the Tories would take the trouble to embrace and publicise a policy position that quite clearly was "not a vote winner"³¹² and also faced growing opposition from the right wing of the Conservative Party (Grice 2011), the right wing media (Mawdsley 2011) and the public (Gettleston 2011). (I discuss the extent of these opposing forces in more detail below, during subsection 6.4.2). That said, Cameron and Mitchell clearly *did* believe (or were at least were willing to make the case to sceptical colleagues) that there *were* positive

³¹⁰ Personal Interview with Andrew Mitchell, October 2014.

³¹¹ As a senior Tory politician told Tim Bale, "[t]he leader is everything in the Conservative Party" (Bale 2016, Loc 837).

³¹² The idea that adhering to the 0.7% target was "not a vote winner" was repeated to be by a number of interviewees, including Victoria Honeyman and Duncan Green, and is supported by public opinion polling (see more, during subsection 6.4.2).

electoral benefits to supporting international development, even if these benefits accrued to the Tories in nuanced and indirect ways. During my interview with Mitchell, I was struck by his ability to recall, without notes or prompting, the specific details of what was evidently private internal polling³¹³. Mitchell, Cameron and their pro-development supporters viewed the Tory prioritisation of international development as a sort of ‘gateway drug’ (my metaphor) for potential Conservative voters. Mitchell would later explain how the “principled success and achievement” of the Conservative-led government in reaching the 0.7% target was something that “gives permission to a group of people who have not always considered themselves to be Conservatives to give us their support” (A. Mitchell 2014, 154).

In summary, I have argued in this subsection that Cameron and Mitchell’s ongoing support the 0.7% target does not make sense unless it is accepted that reaching the target was something they each personally wanted to see happen. Moreover, accepting this does not negate that these men did not also see the political value in framing a commitment to 0.7% as a symbol of Tory modernisation. Much speculation regarding why the UK was able to achieve this target treat these personal and political motivations as mutually exclusive. The reality, I believe is that both motivations were present at the same time, reinforcing each other. Both the Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shock and the Tory modernisation aid salience shock needed to be present to generate the ‘force’ required to change the trajectory of UK aid spending. To further this argument, I now turn to examine the deliberate steps Cameron and Mitchell took to realise their development policy objectives.

6.3.2 *Making development a centre-right issue*

“[T]he great success, which isn’t understood,” Mitchell explained to me as he reflected on his seven years overseeing Tory development policy, is that “we have turned development now into a centre-right issue.”³¹⁴ The success of Cameron and especially Mitchell in fostering a powerful

³¹³ Mitchell told me that he took comfort in early tracking polls showing Conservative support for international development policy amongst women (a group he acknowledged the Conservatives had “a perceived problem with”) and young voters³¹³—demographics that tended to favour Labour. Likewise, Andrew Grice’s article previewing the 2011 Conservative Party Conference also proves how Mitchell relied on internal polling to shore up support for international development amongst his colleagues. Drawing on information apparently passed to him by Mitchell or Mitchell’s office with the intention of sending a message ahead of the 2011 Party conference, Grice (2011) writes that “[t]he Tories’ latest private polling found that the number of people who agree that ‘even as we deal with our deficit, we should be proud of our aid commitments’ has risen from 48 per cent three months ago to 51 per cent, while 38 per cent disagree.”

³¹⁴ This is a claim Mitchell, and others, have advanced elsewhere. For example, In an introduction to his pamphlet on international development for the Legatum Institute (A. Mitchell 2013), Gregory Barker, a minister of state for climate change in Cameron’s first government, credits Mitchell as “the Conservative politician who, more than any other, first in opposition and then in government, was responsible for developing and implementing a new, ambitious and authentic centre-right approach to development, which is now being rolled out around the world” (Barker in A. Mitchell 2013, 2).

and committed constituency for international development within the Conservative Party while in Opposition remains the most underappreciated reason why the Tories realised their promise to reach the 0.7% target once in Government, despite significant opposition.

The first major initiative of the Cameron-Mitchell project to make development a centre-right issue was the establishment of the aforementioned Globalisation and Global Poverty Policy Group's (GGPPG). Lisa Hayley-Jones, who as the director of the secretariat for the GGPPG³¹⁵ attended numerous meetings with Cameron, Mitchell and Lilley during the early days of Tory modernisation, was left in no doubt that the commitment to development was "impregnated into the top" of the Tory leadership: "[t]here's always been, right from the top, a real buy in that this is the right thing to do..."³¹⁶ One indicator of the priority Cameron placed on international development, according to Hayley-Jones, was how carefully the Group's nineteen-strong membership was constructed³¹⁷. The most important of these appointments was that of Peter Lilley—a senior figure on the Tory right and a former Deputy Leader and Shadow Treasurer—to co-chair the GGPPG alongside Geldof³¹⁸.

Lilley's appointment shows how Cameron was keenly aware that he would need to temper opposition from the Tory right-wing if his desire to increase international development spending was to be realised. Lilley appreciated this, explaining to me how:

[T]he fact I'm seen as a right wing Tory probably helped keep the more right-wing Tories on board and made them less critical than they otherwise would have been, I think was [Cameron's] reasoning with that. And I think it probably did help achieve that objective³¹⁹.

Lilley was similarly pragmatic in exercising his leadership of the GGPPG. Although he was "uneasy with the target to spend money", Lilley understood that the role of the group was *not* to question the 0.7% target so much as to examine how this commitment could be made most effective³²⁰. "Given the target [was party policy], I was happy to work on how to make it as effective as possible", Lilley explained to me. This is an example of how Cameron, by virtue of

³¹⁵ Hayley-Jones led a half-dozen strong secretariat that actively supported the nineteen GGPPG members over a year-long period. The quality of the secretariat is also an indicator of the seriousness with which the GGPPG was approached. For example, Hayley-Jones was seconded from KPMG and had previously been a political adviser, while Martin Le Jeune, the Group's communications adviser was, at the time, the Director of Public Affairs at BSKyB.

³¹⁶ Personal interview with Lisa Hayley-Jones, November 2014.

³¹⁷ Not only did the Group include development sector luminaries such as Bob Geldof and Professor Paul Collier alongside former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Rubin, it also featured a number of up-and-coming Tories who would go on to become key pro-development Tory MPs, such as Jeremy Lefroy and Alan Mak.

³¹⁸ While nominally named a co-chair, the reality is that Lilley chaired the Group in practice.

³¹⁹ Personal interview with Peter Lilley, October 2016.

³²⁰ "Personally, as a former Treasury Minister [you] feel uneasy with the target to spend money," Lilley explained to me. "You have a target to achieve objectives, normally, and you try and do them as efficiently as possible. There's a danger that once you have a target to spend money, that you just, that becomes the objective. It's just shovelling the money out of the door, as we said in the book... But, given the target, I was happy to work on how to make it as effective as possible."

staking out and publicising his personal commitment to 0.7%, aligned Tory policy with his personal preferences by effectively ‘cutting off’ alternative policy choices in much the same way as Rudd did ahead of the IRAE process in Australia.

The GGPPG established a policy blueprint that was adhered to for the remainder of Cameron’s leadership of the Conservative Party. Essentially, the Conservatives co-opted Labour’s top-level policy commitments—adherence to the 0.7%³²¹, a commitment to DFID’s independence and the prioritisation of poverty reduction—while adding a distinctive emphasis on value for money, by focusing on enterprise, accountability and transparency (A. Mitchell 2009b). This blueprint was evident in *One World Conservatism: A Conservative Agenda for International Development*, one of a series of Green Papers commissioned by Conservative party and published on 13 July 2009. Mitchell drove the production of the Green Paper. However, in a reflection of his prioritisation and understanding of development issues, Cameron left his imprint on the document by suggesting a catalogue of changes after closely reading the initial draft³²².

Alongside the policy renewal process, Cameron and especially Mitchell were conscious of fostering a committed cadre of development supporters within the Party. To this end, Project Umubano rapidly usurped the GGPPG as the crucial incubator of Tory interest, awareness and policy engagement in international development issues once it launched in 2007. After attracting 43 volunteers to pay their own way to spend two weeks of their summer in Africa in its inaugural year, Umubano rapidly scaled, both in numbers of volunteers and locations, largely through word of mouth (see Table 6.B below)³²³.

Mitchell established Umubano with the objective of fostering a pro-international development policy constituency within the Conservative Party. In a published diary entry from the 2009 edition of Umubano, Mitchell (2009c) explained how “[w]ithin the Conservative Party our project helps ensure there are even more people passionate about international development who have tasted the reality of life in a developing country and are determined to tackle global poverty”. Likewise, Stephen Crabb, who inherited the leadership of Umubano from Mitchell in

³²¹ In fact, the GGPPG went even further than Labour on the 0.7% target, recommending that the Government “should consider whether the target of 0.7% of GNI could be met sooner - by 2010 if possible” (Globalisation and Global Poverty Policy Group 2007, 14). In conjunction with this public-facing message, the weighty analysis contained within *In it together*—the report ran to almost five hundred pages, including seven working papers and contained 76 recommendations—satisfied development policy wonks that the Tories were serious about engaging with development policy.

³²² Mitchell told Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, 283–84) that Cameron “read [the draft] in a way a lot of others hadn’t, because he knows so much about it, and cares. His changes were very sensible. It showed he was on the ball, really interested.”

³²³ Personal interview with Andrew Palmer, November 2016.

2011, explained in an email to the BBC's Andrew Harding, that the project had "helped to create a critical mass of people who are not only interested in development but have seen the lasting difference it can make first hand" (Stephen Crabb, in Harding 2010)³²⁴.

Table 6.B: Project Umubano as an Incubator of Tory Support for Development, 2007-2012³²⁵

Year	Volunteers	Comments
2007	43	The Umubano team includes David Cameron and eight other MPs.
2008	104	The Umubano team includes ten MPs and eleven prospective parliamentary candidates.
2009	≈100	Umubano expands beyond Rwanda, with David Mundell MP leading a half-dozen strong team focusing on the justice sector to Sierra Leone.
2010	65	Stephen Crabb MP inherits the leadership of the Umubano team from Mitchell. Volunteer numbers were down in the aftermath of the 2010 election.
2011	>120	The largest Umubano team.
2012	>100	Involved the largest group of supporters travelling to Sierra Leone.

Umubano connected like-minded individuals and exposed volunteers to development issues in a meaningful way. "Getting out there and seeing" poverty was what made a lasting difference, according to Andrew Palmer, who volunteered on Umubano in 2008, 2009 (in Rwanda) and 2011 (in Sierra Leone). The project generated a "unique camaraderie" among attendees, who felt a "shared sense of purpose"³²⁶. Palmer was among a group of Umubano veterans who sought to build on this momentum and the latent interest in the part in development issues by helping to establish Conservative Friends for International Development (CFID) in 2011, and becoming its inaugural director³²⁷.

Examining the career trajectories of Umubano alumni demonstrates the influence of the project. When the Conservative party was returned to government in 2010, almost 10% of the Conservative caucus in the House of Commons (30 of 306) had taken part in Umubano (A. Mitchell 2010a). Umubano representation was even higher amongst Cameron's first cabinet, with four of the eighteen Conservative members of Cabinet (22%)—Andrew Mitchell, David Mundell, Jeremy Hunt and Cameron himself—having been volunteers. (Furthermore, two

³²⁴ Crabb added that "[t]here is no question that Umubano has helped to generate a new level of positive interest and experience of development within the Conservative Party".

³²⁵ Table 6.B was compiled using data from the following sources: (Cameron 2007; S. Crabb 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012; McClarkin 2011; A. Mitchell 2008a, 2008b, 2009c, 2009a, 2010a; Watt and Revill 2007).

³²⁶ Personal interview with Andrew Palmer, November 2016.

³²⁷ As Palmer put it to me, while Umubano ensured sustained engagement of Tory members on international development issues for two weeks every year, "what about the other fifty?" To this end, CFID "creates a constructive space" for regular discussions about international development within the Conservative Party. "The conversation tries to move past 'is this good or bad?'" explained Palmer, "to 'how can it be better?'" With Umubano adopting a much lower profile after 2012, partly because of the difficulties of operating such an initiative while in government, CFID has become the chief institutional expression of the pro-development bloc of the Conservative party.

additional Umubano alumni would later be appointed to cabinet—Justine Greening (as International Development Secretary) and Stephen Crabb³²⁸. Another alumni, Desmond Swayne, became Minister of State for International Development in 2014). Perhaps the most impressive legacy of Umubano is that four of the six conservative members elected in 2015 to the International Development Committee—an eleven-strong House of Commons committee that oversees DFID—were Umubano alumni: Fiona Bruce, Pauline Latham, Jeremy Lefroy (who had earlier served on the GGDDP) and Wendy Morton.

While it is often believe that Cameron’s embrace of international development left him entirely isolated within the Conservative Party, the reality is that Umubano helped create and, connect a cohort of pro-development Tories, giving Cameron and extra degree of confidence to pursue the 0.7% target than would have otherwise have been the case. Credit for this goes largely to Mitchell. “Umubano was Andrew Mitchell’s baby”, Peter Lilley explained to me³²⁹. The initial idea for Umubano was Mitchell’s (A. Mitchell 2010a). He secured Cameron’s personal support for it. He led the team to Rwanda each year while the Tories were in Opposition, taking along his wife (who is a GP) and two daughters. And Mitchell was relentless in promoting Umubano within Conservative circles, including posting regularly bout it on popular conservative blogs such as *ConservativeHome* (for example A. Mitchell 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009a). In retrospect, however, one of the more significant signs of the growing influence of Mitchell’s project was the way in which it prompted a response from Labour. Explaining the nature of this response is the task to which I now turn my attention towards.

6.3.3 Labour’s Response: The 2009 White Paper

The impressive Tory efforts to turn international development into a centre-right issue drew a response from Labour, the traditional ‘issue owners’ of international development. Douglas Alexander, who was Brown’s Secretary of State for International Development from 2007 to 2010, knew that commissioning a White Paper provided an opportunity to publicly differentiate

³²⁸ Examining the career trajectories of the 21 MPs and prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) included in the 2008 Umubano cohort is especially instructive. Of the ten conservative MPs that volunteered in 2008, five would go on to become Cabinet Ministers during Cameron’s premiership (including both Andrew Mitchell and Justine Greening serving as Secretary of State for International Development). Francis Maude, as Minister for the Cabinet office, attended cabinet. A further three of the ten MPs—David Mundell, Tobias Ellwood and Brooks Newmark—served as junior Ministers during Cameron’s first term, while the remaining two MPs—Desmond Swayne and Mark Lancaster—served as Parliamentary Private Secretaries to David Cameron and Andrew Mitchell, respectively. Additionally, of the eleven PPCs Umubano in 2008, six were elected to the House of Commons in 2010, with an additional two elected in 2015.

³²⁹ Personal interview with Peter Lilley, October 2016. Likewise, Andrew Palmer told me he views Mitchell’s personal commitment to Umubano as “huge”.

Labour's approach³³⁰. Published on 6 July 2009, *Eliminating World Poverty: Building our Common Future* (DFID 2009c) was the fourth international development White Paper published by New Labour. Although a well-regarded document, *Building our Common Future* did not fundamentally change the trajectory of UK aid spending. Rather, its ultimate impact was to strengthen the existing consensus on reaching 0.7%. The decisionmaking episode leading to *Building our Common Future* is best viewed as an important 'ratcheting up' point along the virtuous circle of events and circumstances that ultimately made achieving the 0.7% target possible.

Douglas Alexander was appointed Development Secretary in June 2007, when his mentor Gordon Brown became Prime Minister. According to Seldon and Lodge (2011b, Loc 787), Alexander's appointment as Development Secretary signalled "the critical importance of the area to Brown"³³¹. Like Brown, Alexander is a Scottish 'Son of the Manse', a background that Alexander readily acknowledges informs his own politics and worldview and his emphasis on serving others (Hasan and Macintyre 2009; Keegan 2003)³³². Moreover, an individual who worked closely with Alexander for a number of years was convinced that that Alexander, as Secretary of State for International Development, was ultimately motivated by his strong personal commitment to reducing poverty. At the same time, Alexander is acknowledged as extremely intelligent and a gifted political strategist (Alexander coordinated Labour's General election campaigns in 2001, 2010 and 2015). He harboured a personal ambition to orchestrate a White Paper process and was conscious of distinguishing himself from his predecessor.

In mid-2008, Alexander approached the DFID leadership and expressed his desire to publish a White Paper. Arrangements were made to produce a concept paper. A White Paper team was then rapidly established within DFID to build on this concept paper. In March, DFID published a consultation document calling for submissions (DFID 2009b) and framing the White Paper with

³³⁰ Roy Trivedy, who led DFID's White Paper team, acknowledged to me that Alexander was conscious that, "a [White Paper] would signal to the electorate, whenever the election was called, the difference in the different approaches between political parties and so on." Likewise, Simon Maxwell, who was an adviser during the White Paper process, later wrote that the White Paper incorporated an unspoken challenge: "to position international development politically for the election expected in 2010" (Maxwell 2009, 768).

³³¹ According to Seldon and Lodge (2011b, Loc 787), Alexander's appointment as Development Secretary signalled "the critical importance of the area to Brown." As Douglas had been Blair's last Secretary for Transport, the move to Development would typically be seen as a demotion. However, because they were understood to be such close allies—Alexander was an aide to Brown in the early 1990s and remained one Brown's closest advisers by the time Brown became Prime Minister (Seldon and Lodge 2011b, Loc 794)—Douglas' move to Secretary of State for International Development was seen as a reflection of the pair's interest in this issue area. For an indication of how Brown depended on Alexander for strategic political advice—at least until Alexander was blamed by Brown and Ed Balls for the aborted 2007 election campaign—see Seldon and Lodge (2011b, chapter 2).

³³² In an appearance on David Axelrod's podcast *The Axe Files* (episode 97, November 2016), Alexander acknowledged that his parents "had a powerful sense of—I think inspired by their Christian values—a powerful sense of service which they gave to their children, of which I was one." (Axelrod n.d.).

five questions³³³. In another demonstration of how consistent Alexander's priorities were, four of these questions correlated exactly with the four priorities Alexander had outlined in speeches at the outset of his tenure (the final question was a general one contemplating how to address emerging challenges). Alexander (2009b) reiterated these four priorities once more in his speech to the DFID Annual Conference in London, also held in March and designed as a forum to feed into the White Paper process³³⁴. As you would expect, these themes featured heavily in *Building our Common Future* when it was published in July. The priorities Alexander had been articulating since the beginning of his tenure were translated directly into the pages of the White Paper.

The period during which the White Paper was being developed coincided with a remarkable confluence of international events which created their own domestic pressures. By the end of 2008, as the GFC deepened, "Britain was plunging into a deep recession" (figures would later record that the British economy had contracted by 2% in the final quarter of 2008, alone) (Seldon and Lodge 2011b, Loc 6637). Dealing with the economic crisis, and preparing for the London G20 summit preoccupied Gordon Brown and Number 10 during this period. Meanwhile, DFID and its ministers—two ministers and a parliamentary secretary supported Alexander oversee DFID³³⁵—were preoccupied with responding to the humanitarian emergency brought on by Operation Cast Lead, a 22-day Israeli attack on Gaza (Weizman 2010, 11)³³⁶.

By January, when Alexander publicly announced DFID would publish a new White Paper (Douglas Alexander 2009a), "it was officially confirmed Britain was in... a recession" (Seldon and Lodge 2011b, Loc 6879). According to John Battle, who introduced Alexander's speech at the meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Overseas Development (APGOOD), where the Secretary of State announced the White Paper would be published in the Summer, Alexander chose this venue because it "gave him a platform [to] reach out to the cognoscenti... which he couldn't do through the newspapers because they won't cover development"³³⁷. Battle's observation therefore serves as a valuable reminder that, while development issues remained particularly salient for the development constituency and a key asset of powerful individual

³³³ DFID received over 2500 submissions (DFID 2009a).

³³⁴ An indicator of the standing of this conference, and of the importance the Labour leadership placed on international development issues, is that it was also addressed by Brown (2009) and Foreign Secretary David Milliband (2009).

³³⁵ From October 2008 to July 2009, Gareth Thomas and Ivan Lewis served as Ministers of State for International Development, while Michael Foster served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development.

³³⁶ Personal interview with Richard Darlington, November 2014.

³³⁷ Personal interview with John Battle, October 2014. As it happened, Alexander's speech was delivered on the same day a second 'bailout' package for British banks was announced.

political actors—Brown, Douglas, Cameron and Mitchel foremost among them—the general public, as always, remained more concerned economic issues directly affecting their daily lives.

Pro-development politicians were acutely of this. “[T]he GFC had changed a lot in politics”, one of Alexander’s advisors from the time told me³³⁸. And because Alexander personally supported the development spending ramp up, he knew he needed to repackage and reinforce the rationale for providing development spending given worsening domestic economic conditions. Roy Trivedy, who led DFID’s White Paper team, relayed to me how a much of the focus and of those working on the White Paper was related to building what the team called the ‘theory of the case’; a narrative of what change was required in response to global change³³⁹. “Our narrative, broadly,” recalled Richard Darlington, “was ‘we had a big job to do before the financial crisis, and actually it’s only got bigger’”³⁴⁰. Yet as the budget came under more pressure, and as the public began to feel the effects of the recession, the tendency was to focus attention on pressing needs at home, rather than abroad. As the 2010 general election approached, the decisionmaking dynamics of international development grew evermore closely connected with managing the size of the growing budget deficit. These dynamics are the subject we now turn to in the final section of this chapter.

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³³⁸ Personal interview with Richard Darlington, November 2014.

³³⁹ Personal interview with Roy Trivedy, October 2014

³⁴⁰ To convey this message, Alexander (2009d) made repeated use of World Bank statistics which estimated that, “as a result of the financial crisis as many as 100 million more people across the development world will be trapped in extreme poverty by the end of next year [i.e. 2010].”

6.4 Achieving 0.7%: The ‘Quad’ and the Aid ‘Ringfence’

We will not balance the books on the backs of the world’s poorest.

—Andrew Mitchell, 2011

One of the more bizarre mysteries of contemporary British politics is the ironclad, almost fanatical intensity of the government's commitment to foreign aid spending and the activities of DFID, the Department for International Development.

—Jonathan Foreman, *The Spectator*, 2013

The preceding three sections of this chapter have tracked the emergence and influence of three aid salience shocks in turn: the Short aid salience shock (type I), the Tory modernisation aid salience shock (type II) and the Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shock (type I). This concluding section of the chapter documents the climax of the story of aid policy change in the UK—achieving the 0.7% target. The argument I mount in this section is that this ‘bizarre mystery of contemporary British politics’, to paraphrase Jonathan Foreman, can only be solved by understanding how the combined influence of three aid salience shocks contribute to creating an environment whereby the 0.7% spending target was protected in an arrangement known as the ‘aid ringfence’, despite exceedingly strong political opposition.

In this section, I hone in on the decisionmaking activities of a small group called ‘the Quad’, the name of the four-member decision unit that functioned akin to the inner cabinet of the Cameron-Clegg Government (Laws 2016, Loc 1005). The 2010 elections had resulted in the formation of a Coalition Government between Cameron’s Conservative Party and Nick Clegg’s Liberal Democrats, the first coalition government in the UK in 60 years³⁴¹. From the very start,

³⁴¹ While Conservatives won a plurality of 306 seats at the 2010 elections held on May 6, they fell twenty seats short of forming a majority (For a detailed account of this period, see Seldon and Snowden (2015, chapter 3)). Five days of high political drama ensued, as the Conservatives and Labour courted the Liberal Democrats in ongoing coalition talks. The Conservative’s prior strategic planning for such an eventually ultimately proved decisive and they reached an agreement with the Lib Dems on 11 May (d’Ancona 2013a, 14–22). The next day, the first coalition government in the UK in 60 years was consummated when Cameron and Liberal Democrats leader Nick Clegg held a joint press conference in the Downing Street Rose Garden. For a detailed account of the context of the Rose Garden press conference and its political significance, see d’Ancona (2013a, chapter 2). The press conference is remembered for the easy-going rapport between the two leaders. For example, d’Ancona (2013a, 33) recalls how Cameron and Clegg projected the “impression that the Coalition was the ideal outcome for the nation [and] all they

the Cameron-Clegg government made it clear that its priority was to reduce the budget deficit, with the difficult funding decisions ultimately falling to the Quad, including relating to upholding the 0.7% target. The prioritisation of reducing the budget deficit was itself a response to the impact of the global financial crisis. I begin this concluding section of the story of UK aid policy change by examining Cameron's political response to this event.

6.4.1 The Politics of the Aid Ringfence

The politics of the aid ringfence has its roots in a keynote speech David Cameron delivered at the height of the global financial crisis³⁴². On 18 November 2008, a month after the collapse of investment bank Lehman Brothers, Cameron announced that the Conservatives would abandon an earlier pledge to match Labour's spending plans to 2010-11 (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 720; Summers 2008). Andrew Sparrow (2008), the Guardian's political editor, recognised that, while not technically amounting to much, Cameron's announcement was highly significant "in party positioning terms". By ruling out funding further economic stimulus through borrowing, Cameron demarcated the Tories approach to managing the recession from Labour's. This move marked the beginning of 'Plan A', a political blueprint which placed "deficit reduction at the very heart of [the Conservative Party's] economic strategy" (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 659)³⁴³. From this point, it became inevitable that a future Cameron premiership would be defined by austerity.

Cameron and Osborne were highly alert that implementing 'Plan A' made the Conservatives vulnerable to the familiar charge that they were the 'party of cuts' (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 746). To evade this political trap, Cameron and Osborne assiduously avoided specifying where future spending cuts would fall, despite clearly and regularly intimating the eventual need for them³⁴⁴. On the other hand, in order to preserve their hard-won moderniser credentials, and fend off impressions of a return of the 'nasty party', they promised to protect a number of sensitive policy areas from cuts.

had hoped for personally". This impression would have political ramifications for both men in terms of how they managed the expectations of their respective parties of Coalition Government.

³⁴² This speech took place just a month after the collapse of U.S investment bank Lehman Brothers.

³⁴³ For a detailed account of this strategy, see Seldon and Snowdon (2015, chapter 2).

³⁴⁴ By early 2009, "Cameron and Osborne had... committed themselves against spending their way out of recession" observe Seldon and Snowdon (2015, Loc 746). To specify where cuts would fall, however, was too politically risky. Instead, Cameron alluded to the need for them. For example in his 'Age of Austerity' speech to the Conservative Party Spring Forum (Cameron 2009b) Cameron acknowledged "we will have to take some incredibly tough decisions on taxation, spending, borrowing – things that really affect people's lives." As the 2010 election approached Labour and the Liberal Democrats were no more forthcoming about their own spending plans. This ensured that the core question of the 2010 election campaign related to the speed at which deficit reduction should occur; the Conservatives "were committed to immediate deficit reduction measures" (Hay 2010, 395), while Labour and the Liberal Democrats espoused more Keynesian policies and advocated delayed fiscal rebalancing (Hay 2010, 395).

In a speech on Britain's economic future delivered in early January 2009, Cameron promised to maintain spending plans for the National Health Service (NHS), schools, defence and international development (Cameron 2009a). The first instance of the term 'ring fence' being directly applied to development spending came during Cameron's appearance on the BBC's *Andrew Marr Show* on 11 January (A. Marr 2009)³⁴⁵. The term soon acquired widespread use in the political debate (e.g. Wintour 2009; Hasan and Macintyre 2009). By the time Cameron delivered his leader's speech at the Conservative Party conference in October 2009, the future Prime Minister was deploying this language himself, telling delegates he was "proud that we've ring-fenced the budget for international development" (Cameron 2009d). Yet despite Cameron repeatedly promising to ring fence the development budget (e.g. Cameron 2009c, 2009d), most observers remained sceptical this commitment would hold (e.g. Hasan and Macintyre 2009).

The political logic of protecting the National Health Service (NHS) from cuts was straightforward, as Healthcare was a highly salient issue for the electorate³⁴⁶. The Tories made their health spending promise the feature of the pre-election campaign launched in early 2010 (Ganesh 2014, Loc 3139). On the other hand, cutting aid would have been politically expedient, as development issues were considered a very low priority for voters generally, but even more so for those inclined to vote Conservative³⁴⁷. The ringfence was also loathed by the Tory right wing, who objected to it not just because of their aversion to aid spending but because they believed all spending areas should equally share any fiscal pain. For these reasons, the question for many political observers was not if Cameron would adjust his commitment to the 0.7% target, but when.

Those close to Cameron, however, remained confident he would keep his promise. Chris Mullin, who briefly served as Minister for International Development under Clare Short, recalls walking across St James's Park with Mitchell after listening to him address a Royal Africa Society breakfast about Tory development policy in late September 2009. As the two headed toward Westminster, Mitchell assured Mullin that David Cameron "is entirely signed up to protecting the aid budget" (Mullin 2011, 393–94).

³⁴⁵ When Marr asked Cameron to clarify whether the Conservatives were "going to try and ring fence health, education and international development," Cameron agreed.

³⁴⁶ Ahead of the 2010 election, healthcare was the most salient issue for 26% of British voters, behind only management of the economy (32%) (Dorey 2010, 412).

³⁴⁷ Ahead of the 2010 election, international development issues did not register in an Ipsos MORI poll of salience issues. The closest proxy that registered in the survey was defence issues, which were most important for just 3% of voters (Dorey 2010, 412).

The aid ringfence survived as Tory policy through to the 2010 election before readily finding its way into the initial Coalition Agreement (Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats 2010, 1). Given the commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on development had been included in the election manifestos of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats (it was also in Labour's)³⁴⁸, the inclusion of the pledge to ringfence aid spending in the Coalition agreement was, in one sense, unremarkable. Yet, at the same time, considered alongside the serious actions the Coalition proposed to address to the scale of the "urgent" fiscal challenge, its stance on aid spending—highlighted on the Coalition agreement's first page, no less³⁴⁹—stood out.

To commence the task of budget repair, the Coalition Agreement specified that an emergency budget would be handed down within fifty days, with a full Spending Review reporting in the autumn (Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats 2010, 1). The emergency budget would set the total envelope for government spending, after which the Spending Review would set out the spending limits of each Whitehall department over the coming four financial years (2011-12 through and 2014-15)³⁵⁰.

The emergency budget handed down on 22 June was "ferociously political" (d'Ancona 2013a). It sought to convey the political message of the Coalition standing up to responsibly 'rescue' the British economy in the aftermath of Labour's compulsive prolificacy (Gamble 2015, 47). While the Conservatives had pledged "to cut the deficit by half over the next Parliament" (Gamble 2015, 47) during the election campaign, Osborne used his emergency budget speech to outline an even more aggressive approach; the Coalition had decided it would eliminate the budget deficit in the life of the Parliament and do so primarily through spending cuts (Gamble 2015, 48).

This decision immediately reduced the envelope of spending available for distribution during the spending review. It meant that, once the pledges on the NHS and international aid were taken into account, acknowledged Osborne in his emergency budget speech, "other departments will face an average real cut of around 25 per cent over four years" (Osborne 2010)³⁵¹. In light of this news, the decision to protect aid spending became an even more visible

³⁴⁸ In a demonstration of the extent of consensus on high-level development policy in the UK, each of the major parties explicitly included a commitment to reaching the 0.7% target in 2013 in their 2010 election manifestos (Liberal Democrats 2010, 62; Conservative Party 2010, 117; Labour Party 2010, 70).

³⁴⁹ The first page of the initial coalition agreement established that "[t]he target of spending 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid will also remain in place" (Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats 2010, 1). An expanded coalition agreement published ten days later featured even more favourable terms for aid spending, promising not only to honour the 0.7% commitment by 2013, but to "enshrine this commitment in law" (HM Government 2010, 22).

³⁵⁰ First established during Blair's premiership, Spending Reviews are initiated periodically and operate as medium term financial management tools which "set departmental spending limits for a number of years ahead" (D. Webb and Allen 2010, 4).

³⁵¹ Further details are set out in the budget documents (H. M. Treasury 2010a, 17).

target of opposition, as reaching the 0.7% target required a substantial real *increase* in the international development budget. In public, senior Coalition figures promised repeatedly during the spending review process that the 0.7% ringfence would be maintained. But as we will see, behind the scenes, within the ‘Quad’, the wisdom of upholding the target was questioned.

6.4.2 *The Aid Ringfence is tested: the 2010 Spending Review and its aftermath*

The Quad formed organically as part of preparations for the 2010 emergency budget (Laws 2016, Loc 1005; Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 1105). The members of this small group were Prime Minister David Cameron; Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne (Conservative); Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrat); and Treasury Secretary Danny Alexander (Liberal Democrat). This body subsequently became the ultimate decision unit not only for the subsequent 2010 Spending Review³⁵², but for key economic policy decisions over the life of the Coalition Government (Forsyth 2012)³⁵³. While a Public Expenditure (PEX) Committee was established to oversee the Spending Review process, taking responsibility for liaising with departments and the Treasury and reporting to cabinet at key intervals³⁵⁴, the Quad remained the final arbiter of where spending cuts would fall. It was the Quad that had the final say on whether or not to abandon 0.7%.

The 2010 Spending Review process was the subject of intense media scrutiny and pitted cabinet ministers against each other in departmental turf wars. It was exceedingly political. In the process of reconstructing this episode, I became increasingly convinced that, at the very least, delaying the date for achieving the 0.7% target must have been countenanced at the highest levels. When I had the opportunity to press Andrew Mitchell on this, he confirmed my suspicions. He acknowledged a delay in achieving 0.7% had been considered, conceding that “[t]here was discussion about it and the argument went backwards and forwards but I was very much opposed to change in all of this and indeed so was the Prime Minister”³⁵⁵.

³⁵² Reflecting in 2012 on the Quad’s role in the 2010 Spending Review, Danny Alexander noted that the “combination of intensive bilateral negotiations, with a small, central decision making body, ensured that decisions made through the Spending Review were consistent with the coalition agreement and had the authority of the leaders of both parties within the Government. Where necessary, it could also focus on sensitive areas of public spending (Danny Alexander 2012)”.

³⁵³ David Laws, a senior figure in the Liberal Democrats throughout the period of Coalition Government who was involved in negotiating the Coalition Agreement and briefly held the post of Chief Secretary to the Treasury before resigning due to an expenses scandal, recalls that the Quad would generally meet four or five times “over the course of the eight-week run-ins to” Autumn Statements and Budgets (Laws 2016, Loc 1344).

³⁵⁴ To guide the development of the 2010 Spending Review, a Spending Review Framework was published on 8 June (H.M. Treasury 2010). It set out the process and explained the role of the PEX Committee (H.M. Treasury 2010, 18).

³⁵⁵ Personal interview with Andrew Mitchell, November 2014.

Since conducting this interview, further evidence has emerged confirming Mitchell's account. In their behind-the-scenes account of Cameron's Prime Ministership, Seldon and Snowden (2015, Loc 7864) report that Danny Alexander—who was integral in overseeing the details of the Spending Review³⁵⁶—oversaw “a debate about whether the [0.7%] figure should apply immediately or be delayed until 2015”. Alexander recalled that “in the end we [i.e. the Quad] decided that it should be met by 2013, which secured broad agreement” (Alexander in Seldon and Snowden 2015, Loc 7862). Seldon and Snowden (2015, Loc 1154) also confirm Mitchell's report that the protection of international development spending was “primarily at the instigation of Cameron himself.” In short, Cameron and the power to personally intervene in the Quad to protect aid spending.

The decision to protect the aid budget in the 2010 spending review actually increased the pressure on the aid ringfence by driving up the political stakes for Cameron's ongoing support³⁵⁷. In the final reckoning, the 2010 Spending Review cut departmental budgets other than health and international development by an average of 19% over four years (H. M. Treasury 2010b, 5)³⁵⁸, with real decreases in *total* departmental spending of 11.5% over four years. In stark contrast to the bleak overall picture, the Department for International Development's budget was slated to receive a real increase in funds of almost 38% (see Figure 6.B below)³⁵⁹. Furthermore, by this point, public opinion polls tracking support for aid spending had been moving discernibly since the onset of the financial crisis. The dual impact of constant media speculation about where pending spending cuts would fall, and repeated references to ‘protecting’ the aid budget, combined to reduce public support for aid spending (Lindstrom and Henson 2010, 8)³⁶⁰.

³⁵⁶ According to Seldon and Snowden (2015, Loc 1154) the 2010 Spending Review was “tightly controlled operation: besides Treasury officials, and the voices of Osborne and his aides, the other heavyweight input comes from Danny Alexander, who oversees much of the detail.”

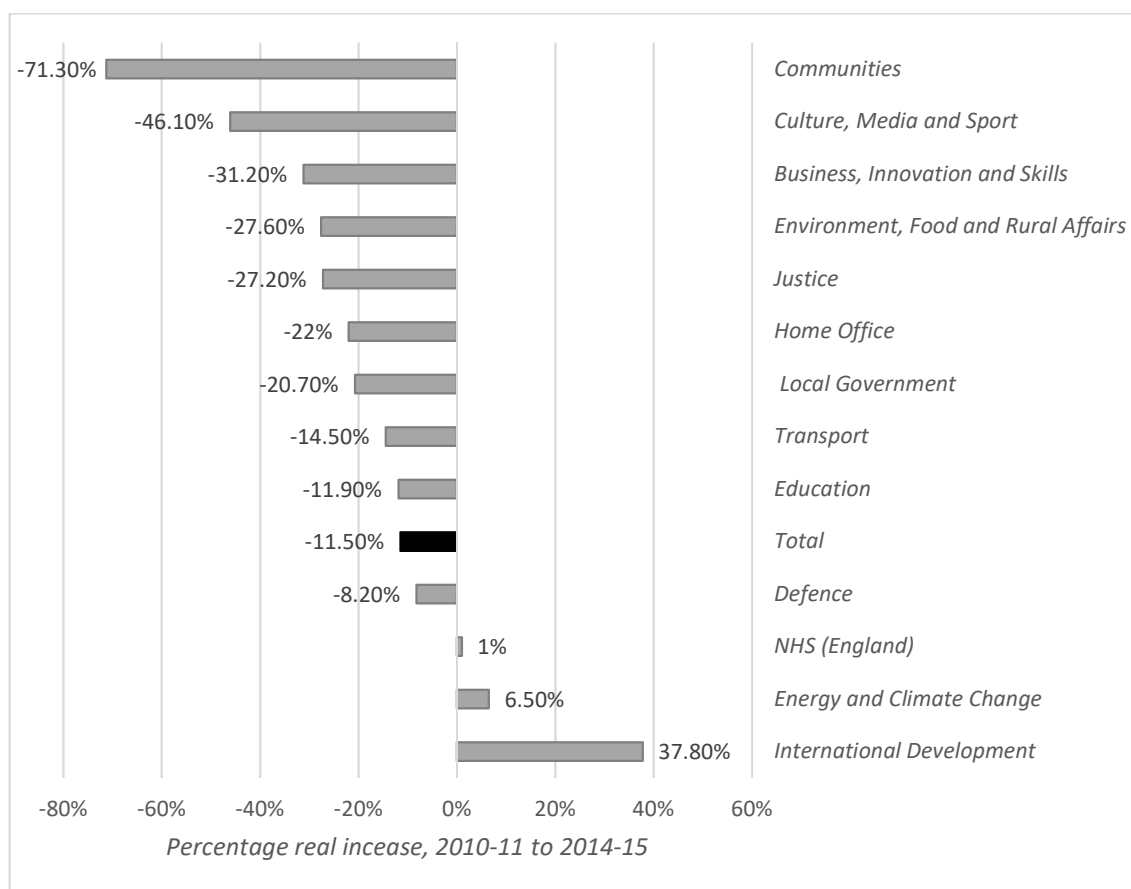
³⁵⁷ Writing in *The Guardian* in the aftermath of the publication of the 2010 Spending Review, Nilima Gulrajan (2010) worried that “[s]ingling DFID out for special treatment is sacrificing public support for aid that has been so critical for DFID's past successes”.

³⁵⁸ This was less than the initially-forecast 25% because of additional savings identified from savings on welfare and public sector pension contributions (d'Ancona 2013a, 56).

³⁵⁹ Total spending on ODA (i.e. including ODA eligible spending by non-DFID departments), was slated to increase from £8.4b in 2010 to £12.0 in 2013. It is also important to note that while the volume of funds to be administered by DFID rose dramatically, the envelope for DFID's administrative costs (i.e. those to actually run the department) were actually halved by the Spending Review. The 38% figure I quote (for change in the Departmental expenditure limited (DEL) for DFID) is derived from figures published in the Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2011 (HM Treasury 2011, Table 1.9, page 28) showing spending for international development increasing from £7,473m in 2010-11 to £10,299m in 2014-15, representing a real increase of £2,826m, or 37.8%.

³⁶⁰ A report published by the Institute for Development Studies summarising trends in UK public opinion in the late 2000s and published in 2010 found that “support for aid spending has declined as the scale of the UK's budget deficit has become apparent and actual cuts in spending have begun” (Lindstrom and Henson 2010, 9). DFID's own tracking surveys showed that 55% of respondents thought the UK should spend more on aid in September 2007. By February 2010, this number had declined to 40% (Lindstrom and Henson 2010, 4). Overviews of UK public opinion and aid from this period include those by BritainThinks (2010), Lindstrom and Henson (2010, 2011) and Glennie, Straw and Wild (2012).

Figure 6.B: Real Changes in Departmental Expenditure Limit by Department (2010-11 to 2014-15)³⁶¹



Opinion polling specifically addressing the aid ring fence was even more definitive. A YouGov poll conducted in July 2010 that asked respondents about their views on dealing with the budget deficit revealed that, while the ring fencing of the NHS was popular (58% of respondents supported exempting health from spending cuts), only 15% thought international development should be exempted from cuts. On the other hand, 60% were opposed to maintaining the aid ring fence (BritainThinks 2010, 4, 14)³⁶². A series of other polls yielded similar insights³⁶³.

³⁶¹ Figure 6.B is adapted from a chart included in a brief published by the institute of fiscal studies in 2011 (Crawford and Johnson 2011, 8). The 37.8% figure (for change in the Departmental expenditure limited (DEL for DFID) is derived from figures published in the Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses 2011 (HM Treasury 2011, Table 1.9, page 28) showing spending for international development increasing from £7,473m in 2010-11 to £10,299m in 2014-15, representing a real increase of £2,826m, or 37.8%.

³⁶² This data is drawn from a YouGov poll commissioned by BritainThinks for PricewaterhouseCoopers which surveyed 1788 members of the general public in the UK in an online questionnaires on 27 and 28 July 2010 (BritainThinks 2010, 4, 14).

³⁶³ A Harris Interactive poll from the same period revealed that 64% of voters thought "aid to developing countries should bear the *biggest* part of cuts in government spending" (Lindstrom and Henson 2010, 4, emphasis added). Similarly, results from a series of UK Public Opinion Monitor surveys conducted in mid-2010 showed 63% of respondents thought aid spending "should be reduced as part of efforts to address the UK budget deficit" (Lindstrom and Henson 2010, 8), while only 8% advocated increasing aid spending³⁶³.

For supporters of his party, Cameron's commitment to aid spending was even more anachronistic. Results from the Public Opinion Monitor showed that "Conservative voters were 12 per cent more likely to support cutting the aid budget than Labour voters" (Lindstrom and Henson 2010, 11). In an online poll hosted by the website *ConservativeHome*, 32% of Tory members nominated international development as their lowest priority for public spending, marginally exceeded only by the number who thought 'culture, media and sport' should receive less priority (34%) (Montgomery 2009)³⁶⁴. A similar survey overseen by *ConservativeHome* in late 2012 asked members to respond to how they felt about a range of deficit reduction measures. 84% of respondents said they would find a reduction in the aid reduction acceptable, versus only 13% against (Montgomery 2012)³⁶⁵.

Cameron also faced heated opposition in the press and from prominent right-wing Tories such as Defence Minister Liam Fox (Wintour 2011). "Hardly a day passes" observed influential conservative blogger Tim Montgomery³⁶⁶ in September 2011, "without someone in the centre right press suggesting that we should cut the aid budget in order to reduce the deficit..." (Montgomery 2011). Montgomery provided seven excerpts from recent critical articles, including four from the centre-right tabloid the *Daily Mail*, which made opposition to the UK's expanding aid spending a cause célèbre (Mawdsley 2015)³⁶⁷. *The Spectator* suggested in an editorial that maintaining the aid ringfence was politically insane³⁶⁸.

It is a testament to the depth of Cameron's personal and political commitment to the 0.7% spending target that, in the face of such broad opposition, he refused to let the issue slide from the political agenda. On the contrary, following the 2010 Spending Review, Cameron "continue[d] to invest time and political capital in [international development], going far beyond

³⁶⁴ This online survey attracted 1812 respondents (Montgomery 2009).

³⁶⁵ Support for reducing aid spending was second only to reducing Britain's contribution to the EU, a measure acceptable to 95% of respondents (Montgomery 2012). Furthermore, the commitment to aid spending was not only failing to win the Tories any new adherents—a 2011 *Yougov* poll showed that the aid ring fence was not winning any voters over to the conservative party, with only 7% of voters saying "the decision to increase the aid budget makes them more favourable towards the Conservatives, while 37 per cent say it makes them less favourable" (J. Jones 2011).

³⁶⁶ Montgomery's status as an influential blogger is acknowledged by Ganesh (2014, Loc 3933) and also Bale—one of the foremost academic experts on the Conservative Party, who regularly cites *ConservativeHome* (e.g. Bale 2016, Loc 7125).

³⁶⁷ "Most of the attacks on the coalition's aid policy are to be found in the press and particularly the *Daily Mail*" argues Magee (2014, 5). The paper's sister paper, *The Mail on Sunday*, would later launch a campaign in early 2016 to gather 100,000 signatures for a petition that would force a Commons debate on the 0.7% law—a campaign that succeeded. Ian Birrell, who worked as a speechwriter for Cameron during the 2010 campaign, was another vocal critic of Cameron's aid commitment who was often published in the *Daily Mail*. While Birrell agreed with Cameron "on many things" and admired the Prime Minister as a politician, Birrell did not hide his "abhorrence for [Cameron]'s blinkered, backfiring and bovine obsession with foreign aid" (Birrell 2016).

³⁶⁸ "The decision to ring-fence Health and Education is, of course, raw politics," editorialised *The Spectator* in 2013, before adding, "[a]s for international development, that's a trickier ring-fence to understand. Why would any sane government in so much debt be so determined to waste money abroad" (The Spectator 2013).

support for the 0.7% figure” (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 7867). In May 2011, for example, Cameron chose to directly confront the *Daily Mail* and its readers after the newspaper published an article critical of Britain’s aid spending to coincide with the G8 summit in Deauville, France. In a follow up press conference, Cameron deliberately called on a *Daily Mail* journalist and delivered an impassioned and highly personal defence of the UK’s aid spending (Wintour 2011; Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 7863)³⁶⁹.

A month later, Cameron published an op-ed titled ‘Why we’re right to ringfence the aid budget’ in *The Guardian* (Cameron 2011a)³⁷⁰. He then told delegates gathered at the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation conference the following day that “[w]hen you make a promise to the poorest people in the world you should keep it” (Cameron 2011b). In July 2011, Cameron used the occasion of a visit to Lagos, Nigeria, to confront aid sceptics once more. “There are some people back at home who don’t like Britain’s aid commitment,” Cameron acknowledged. “They see us make painful cuts to budgets at home and wonder why we are increasing our spending abroad” (Cameron 2011c). Then, in April 2012, Cameron accepted an invitation by the UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon to co-chair a UN Committee charged with developing successor goals to the MDGs, a role Mitchell persuaded him to accept (Wintour 2012; Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 7890).

Why was Cameron willing to spend his limited time and political capital to ensure a discretionary policy like international development remained on the political agenda, given how unpopular his 0.7% commitment was? My answer has been advanced in the preceding two sections of the chapter; Cameron was both personally committed to international development issues and firmly believed that a modern Conservative party should be too. It is also true that, by this time, Cameron’s personal political credibility was closely entwined with his 0.7% promise. In any case, the political pressure for him to abandon his 0.7% promise continued to ratchet up, reaching critical levels again during preparations for the 2012 Autumn Statement.

6.4.3 The Aid Ringfence is tested again: the 2012 Autumn Statement

The Autumn Statement, also known as the ‘mini-budget’, is one of two public statements Her Majesty’s Treasury makes annually updating economic forecasts. By the time the Quad began

³⁶⁹ “Of course it’s difficult when we’re making difficult decisions at home,” acknowledged Cameron, ‘but I don’t think that 0.7 per cent of our gross national income, I don’t think that is too high a price to pay for trying to save lives” (Cameron in Wintour 2011).

³⁷⁰ While acknowledging that “our decision to protect our aid budget abroad is a controversial one” Cameron (2011a) explained that he remained “convinced” his stance was right for both moral and national interest reasons.

to prepare for the 2012 autumn statement, due in December, the state of the British economy was increasingly parlous. Economic data released in June 2012 had confirmed that the UK was in the midst of a ‘double-dip’ recession (Ganesh 2014, Loc 4018; O’Conner 2012), triggering prompting “[i]ntense conversations” in the Treasury over the summer as it became evident the government would fall behind targets it had outlined in 2010 (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 4336). Osborne in particular was under “tremendous pressure” ahead of the 2012 Autumn Statement (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 4336) given the negative public reaction to what became known as the ‘Omnishambles’ budget he handed down in March³⁷¹.

As the Quad sat down to an informal dinner at the beginning of August and began to consider options for improving the economy (Laws 2016, Loc 3703), the aid ringfence was vulnerable given the imperative to find further budget savings. Yet two additional factors, beyond the ongoing opposition from the public, the media and the Tory right wing, greatly raised expectations that the 0.7% target would be abandoned, or at least pushed back. First, the spending schedule set out in the 2010 Spending Review had kept spending relatively constant across 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 before building in a large jump in 2013-14 in order to reach the 0.7% spending target by 2013. The back-ended trajectory agreed in the Spending Review meant that a decision to halt aid spending prior to the ramp up would generate approximately £3 billion in savings (Pryke 2011) in the coming fiscal year alone, not to mentioned the compounding yearly savings into the future. Keenly aware of this potential, Treasury officials advocated delaying the achievement of 0.7% target (Laws 2016, Loc 3795).

The second reason development insiders thought the aid ringfence was especially vulnerable at this time related to the cabinet reshuffle Cameron announced in early September, which included Andrew Mitchell moving from International Development Secretary to Chief Whip³⁷². On hearing of her demotion from Secretary of Transport to International Development Secretary, Justine Greening, was reported to have told Cameron she had not come into

³⁷¹ Osborne’s budget had undermined the Government’s “reputation for prudence and sensible economic management” (Ashcroft and Oakeshott 2015, 392) and distracted from the Coalition’s key message of deficit reduction (Laws 2016, Loc 2092; d’Ancona 2013a, 233). David Laws (2016, Loc 3819) records in his memoirs that “[a]fter the Omnishambles Budget, George Osborne desperately needs to have a good, solid Autumn Statement.” Likewise, Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, 391) acknowledge Osborne received most of the blame for the “politically disastrous” budget. In particular, the decision in the budget to reduce the 50% rate of tax on incomes over £150,000 to 45% was controversial, given the prevailing economic climate. For detailed accounts of the ‘Omnishambles’ budget, see Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, chapter 32), Seldon and Snowdon (2015, chapter 17) and d’Ancona (2013a, chapter 12).

³⁷² Mitchell’s ongoing commitment to the International Development portfolio meant he moved on reluctantly, according to Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, 420). Indeed, Mitchell himself would later talk about his regret at moving from DFID (A. Mitchell 2015b, 7).

government to distribute money to poor people (Coffey 2013; Daily Mail 2012). There was speculation that Greening's appointment signalled a pending aid cut.

Against this backdrop, the Quad and a handful of close advisers met at Chequers on 17 September to calibrate strategy at the outset of the political year (Laws 2016, Loc 3191). David Laws, who, was present at the meeting, recalls the Autumn Statement being the first item on the agenda that morning³⁷³. After Osborne opened by explaining that borrowing figures were suffering because of sluggish growth, Cameron proposed cutting funding to the NHS to deal with the deficit. Laws objected to this idea. According to Laws' account, Osborne then countered by raising "the possibility of delaying the delivery of our commitment to achieving 0.7 per cent of national income on development assistance" (Laws 2016, Loc 3231).

Cameron knocked this suggestion down, just as he had in the 2010 Spending Review. "Is it really worth all the political hassle of being seen to go back on a very clear pledge?" Laws recalls Cameron replying. "I'm not keen—the NGOs would be really angry and they would mount a huge campaign against us" (Laws 2016, Loc 3250). While Cameron publicly ruled out backing away from the target nine days later, when he reiterated the UK's commitment to 0.7% in a speech at the UN (Cameron 2012), it appears that various members of the Quad continued to contemplate cutting aid as the Autumn Statement neared. This is not surprising, as an increased need to find savings to counter "massive upward revisions expected on government borrowing" (Laws 2016, Loc 3790) coincided with a political scandal that loaded further pressure on the 0.7% target.

Andrew Mitchell resigned from his post as Chief Whip on 19 October, after being unable to weather the political fall-out from a month-long scandal that came to be known as 'Plebgate'. The scandal was triggered when *The Sun*, in a front page splash on 21 September, alleged Mitchell had called a police officer a 'pleb' after the officer refused to let Mitchell exit the main Downing Street gate on his bicycle—an account Mitchell continues to deny (d'Ancona 2013a, 296)³⁷⁴. The politically-loaded connotations of the 'pleb' pejorative powered the scandal, tapping into ingrained stereotypes of Tories as 'born to rule' toffs who considered themselves above reproach³⁷⁵. As Mitchell remained closely associated with the 0.7% target, the episode

³⁷³ Laws, who resigned his post as Chief Secretary to the Treasury just three weeks after the Coalition formation due to an expenses scandal, had returned to cabinet in the reshuffle announced on 3 September 2012. Laws had remained a pivotal figure in the Liberal Democrats and was especially close to Clegg.

³⁷⁴ For detailed accounts of the 'plebgate' affair see d'Ancona (2013a, chapter 16) and Seldon and Snowden (2015, chapter 20).

³⁷⁵ "At the heart of the whole [plebgate] story", argues d'Ancona (2013a, 301), "was the Cameron Government's neuralgic relationship with class".

likely reinforced the notion that aid was a pet project of an aloof and out-of-touch elite incapable of understanding the economic travails felt by middle-Britain. On the back of this scandal, a ComRes poll from mid-October showed the Tories not only trailing Labour by nine points (41% to 33%) but having lost four points since to Labour since September (Seldon and Snowden 2015, Loc 4354).

While from this point the precise sequencing of Quad decisionmaking in the lead up to the 2012 Autumn Statement is unclear, my research uncovered that, of the four Quad members, only Cameron remain steadfastly committed to keeping 0.7%. Each of the other three members, at some point, demonstrated a willingness to cut aid spending. David Laws's account of this period recounts a meeting on 11 October of the senior trio of Lib Dems—Clegg, Alexander and Laws—in the Cabinet Office, during which Laws indicates cuts to international development were considered (Laws 2016, Loc 3790). Laws notes that the Quad was divided on the issue of 0.7% target. “The view of both George Osborne and Danny Alexander was that there was a strong economic case for postponing the target until 2018, which would produce huge savings”, Laws recalls. “But both Nick Clegg and David Cameron took the view that they had made a pledge on the overseas aid target and that they both wanted to keep it” (Laws 2016, Loc 3790).

While Laws' account records that Clegg wanted to uphold the 0.7% target at this particular point in time, multiple others sources suggest that Clegg was willing to abandon his stance, perhaps at other points in the process. An article published in the *Daily Mail* in September 2015 reported that Clegg “offered to delay the Government's controversial foreign aid target but was turned down by David Cameron” in 2012 (Groves 2015). The article quoted a source who suggested that “there was a feeling that it might be easier all round if we pushed back the target” (Groves 2015). Seldon and Snowden (2015, Loc 7874), more reliable than the *Daily Mail*, make a similar claim, reporting that “within the Quad, even Clegg begins to say, ‘You know, it would make our lives much easier if we push back the 0.7%’”³⁷⁶.

Clegg and Osborne agreed on the final shape of the Autumn Statement in a meeting at Clegg's house on Sunday 25 November. Various accounts, including a report in the *Financial Times* (Bounds 2012) support the idea that that aid cuts were still being considered well into November. It was only as Osborne rose to deliver the Autumn Statement to the House of

³⁷⁶ While not offering specific timing, this account suggests Clegg backed away from this target in early 2013, perhaps during preparations for the 2013 budget. Although I cannot prove exactly *when* Clegg made this suggestion, I suspect it was around late October or November 2012, perhaps at the meetings of the Quad on 19 and 20 November (Laws 2016, Loc 3815). Of this period David Laws (2016, Loc 3797) recalls “we [i.e. senior Lib Dems] spent most of October and November focused on the contents of the Autumn Statement. This was a tough time for Nick.”

Commons on 5 December that it became 100% clear the aid ringfence had remained protected. “We made a promise as a country that we would spend 0.7% of our gross national income on international Development” Osborne reminded his colleagues, “and I am proud to be part of the first British Government in history which will honour that commitment, and honour it as promised next year [i.e. 2013]” (Osborne 2012).

While reconstructing the precise activities of the Quad proved impossible, my point in relaying the details of these above is to demonstrate that this decision unit seriously considered delaying or abandoning the 0.7% target on at least two occasions—during preparation for the 2010 Spending Review and ahead of the 2012 Autumn Statement³⁷⁷. And only David Cameron remained steadfastly committed to the 0.7% target. This finding challenges the commonly held view that the Liberal Democrats functioned as a ‘human shield’ for Cameron (Bennister and Heffernan 2012, 796)³⁷⁸. It was not the Liberal Democrats doing the protecting of the aid budget, but David Cameron. At the pivotal moment, Cameron directly and personally intervened in aid policy decisionmaking process to protect the 0.7% target.

§§§

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that aid policy change in the UK was a result of three interlocking and reinforcing aid salience shocks. The Short aid salience shock laid the platform for an ‘issue-ownership’ spiral to emerge, a dynamic which saw Labour and the Conservatives competed to ‘own’ development issues. The momentum from the Conservative side was provided by the Tory modernisation and Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shocks. These two salience shocks intertwined like a double-helix, with the personal and political logics of the respective salience shocks reinforcing each other. The unusual strength of these forces ‘pushing’ aid spending

³⁷⁷ While it is highly likely abandoning or delaying the 0.7% target was considered by the Quad (or some of its members individually) on other occasions, I can only conclusively verify that it was actively considered and rejected at two meetings of the Quad. However, there are also strong grounds to suggest that the Quad again considered dropping the target ahead of the handing down of the 2012 ‘Omnishambles’ budget, potentially at the Quad meeting of Monday 12 March (Seldon and Snowden 2015, Loc 3652). Evidence for this includes Seldon and Snowden’s (2015, Loc 7863) account, which relies heavily on interviews with Andrew Mitchell, suggesting that “[t]he critical point on the 0.7% commitment comes in early 2012”. These authors report that Mitchell approaches Osborne “to persuade Treasury to stick to the 0.7% commitment, recognising that 2013 is the year in which the government had agreed to reach it.” Media reports from the same period also indicate this to be a possibility.

³⁷⁸ This is not to say that Cameron did not use the fact of the Coalition as an explanation to the Tory right wing as to why dropping the 0.7% commitment was difficult for him.

towards the 0.7% target meant that, despite very significant opposition—from within the Conservative Party, its supporter-base and the media—the UK realised its promise to reach the 0.7% target and, to this point, has kept it. At the same time, the concluding section demonstrated how Cameron's repeated interventions to protect the aid ringfence, were decisive in achieving this outcome. (Furthermore, in Chapter 9, I also document how the UK's large and well connected development constituency contributed to reinforcing the upward momentum of UK aid spending).

Viewing aid policy change in the UK with an actor-specific perspective not only reveals the influence of key individual actors such as Clare Short, Andrew Mitchell and David Cameron, but again underscores how factors from all levels of analysis are constantly interacting to exert influence on aid policy decisionmaking. For example, we have seen how a benign international environment contributed to the prospect of articulating a new development agenda, and how Short used the Millennium Development Goals to mobilise public support poverty reduction and the DFID's role (subsection 6.1.2). We have also seen how Cameron's initial election as leader of the Conservative Party has a referendum on party positioning, opening the way for 'Tory modernisation' and increasing the symbolic utility the 0.7% target (subsection 6.2.1). We have seen how Douglas Alexander's distinct views on the role of aid in an increasingly interdependent world shaped Labour's 2009 White Paper. And we have also seen how the economic impacts wrought by the global financial crisis recast the domestic political debate, and the implications this had for the prospects of aid policy change.

As we now shift our attention to explaining aid policy change in the Netherlands, many of these same broad dynamics are apparent. One major difference, however, is that unlike in the UK and Australia, where aid policy change was the product of three interacting aid salience shocks, Dutch abandonment of the 0.7% target was the product of a single, long-acting aid salience shock.

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7 Explaining Aid Policy Change in the Netherlands

For almost forty years, beginning in 1975, the Netherlands prided itself on meeting, and usually exceeding, the 0.7% of GNI target. Then, following parliamentary elections in 2012, the coalition agreement negotiated by the centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy and the centre-left Labour Party signalled that the longstanding spending trajectory would be abandoned. This decision was confirmed and detailed in *A World to Gain*, published in April 2013. Like so many other realms of Dutch society and politics over the past generation, Dutch development spending would also experience a decisive and unexpected departure from what had long been considered 'normal' behaviour.

I argue in this chapter that the decision to abandon the longstanding Dutch aid spending trajectory can be explained by the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock. This indirect (type II) **aid salience shock** was triggered and sustained by Geert Wilders, the populist leader of the far-right Party for Freedom. Wilders' capacity to shape the **political agenda** allowed him to reframe what 0.7% symbolised to Dutch society by casting development spending as an 'elite hobby' of an internationally orientated and self-absorbed Dutch cultural and political elite. The 'elite hobby' aid salience shock was a source of consistent and sustained pressure on the 0.7% target, gradually eroding political support for the existing aid spending consensus until it disintegrated.

This chapter is structured to demonstrate this process of disintegration. In order to do so effectively, I dedicate part one to describing the conditions which led to the questioning of the existing development consensus. It is impossible to understand the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock without a knowledge of the dramatic changes that occurred within Dutch society in the early 2000s. In part two, I document how, partly in response to the ongoing pressure supplied by Wilders, the ongoing relevance of the 0.7% target begins to be challenged from a range of different perspectives.

In part three, I track how the question of whether to adhere to the 0.7% target split the Christian Democrats. This split had direct implications for development policymaking during the 2010-2012 period and was exploited by Wilders to the point where it played a role in the downfall of

the Rutte I government. Finally, in part four, I document the circumstances which lead to the final abandonment of the 0.7% target and the related attempts to establish a new development consensus.

To many outside observers (including myself, prior to conducting this research) Dutch abandonment of the 0.7% target appeared remarkably sudden. The reality this chapter documents is quite the opposite. The way the long-held consensus on Dutch development spending was progressively challenged before being suddenly overturned is quite typical of how policy change occurs in the Netherlands. The viscous, slow moving quality of Dutch policymaking is referred to as *stroperigheid*—literally syrupiness (Kaarbo 2013, Loc 1629). What I relate in the account that follows is how Wilders' persistent and powerful efforts to reframe what 0.7% symbolised gradually changed the parameters of the political debate, ultimately leading to the abandonment of the 0.7% target.

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7.1 The Context for Questioning the Development Consensus: Development Aid and Dutch National Identity

The Dutchman does not exist.

—Princess Maxima, 2007

The political elite in the Netherlands systematically ignores the interests and problems of the citizen.

—PVV Election Manifesto, 2006

I don't love Wilders. He's a pig, but he says what many people think.

—Maria Kuhlman, 2011³⁷⁹

This opening section of the chapter establishes the context for understanding how and why the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock emerged. While Wilders' skill in controlling the political agenda

³⁷⁹ Maria Kulman, who lives in a majority immigrant neighbourhood in southwestern Amsterdam, was quoted in a *New York Times* article by Steven Erlanger (2011).

undoubtedly accounts for his political influence, there is also no doubt that this influence is, to some extent, a product of dramatically changed political environment in the Netherlands. Acknowledging this, my account begins by returning to events of the ‘long year of 2002’, which is widely accepted as an inflection point in Dutch political history. From this point on, a distinctly different political culture emerged in the Netherlands. In the second subsection below, I turn to examine how the changed political culture and the emergence of new social cleavages challenged the traditional consensus-seeking mode of Dutch decisionmaking. In the third subsection, I bring together these threads by looking at how this new political environment provided the opportunity for Wilders to reframe the symbolism of the 0.7% target in the Dutch context.

7.1.1 *The Long Shadow of ‘the Long Year of 2002’*

2002 has emerged as a dividing line in Dutch political history, the point at which the predictable old order was replaced by something unfamiliar and disruptive³⁸⁰. The critical moment transpired during the evening of 6 May, when Pim Fortuyn was assassinated by an animal rights activist just nine days before the national election he was contesting. Fortuyn’s death “provoked an extraordinary outburst of shock, grief, anger and quasi-religious hysteria” (Buruma 2006, 37). It was, argues Ian Buruma (2006, 38), “the most sensational murder in the Netherlands since 1672,” when Johan de Witt was lynched at the height of the Dutch Golden Age³⁸¹.

Fortuyn had burst onto the Dutch political scene in late 2001, his policies and personality completely at odds with the typical Dutch politician. Fortuyn was a divisive character—a maverick who defied easy categorisation. He was highly charismatic, outspoken, openly homosexual, stridently anti-Islam, a libertarian, a populist and a “spectacular loner” (Simpson 2002). While many believed Fortuyn’s views and approach were “giving rise to hatred” (Simpson 2002), his message resonated with a portion of the electorate who “felt that their views were being ignored, particularly on questions related to immigration and the integration of immigrants into Dutch society” (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 71). In the aftermath of his assassination, Fortuyn’s eponymous party, the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF)³⁸², achieved spectacular

³⁸⁰ For an account of ‘The Long Year of 2002’, the period of “political confusion and shock” between autumn 2001 and spring 2003, see Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 28–30).

³⁸¹ Chapter two of Buruma’s *Murder in Amsterdam* reflects on how Fortuyn’s murder impacted Dutch culture and society, and considers the ways this event was mirrored by the subsequent murder, of Fortuyn’s friend and ‘kindred spirit’, Theo Van Gogh. Kees van Kersbergen (2008) also identifies Fortuyn’s murder as a turning point in the political history of the Netherlands, recalling that, “the popular reaction to the murder was unprecedented: the centre-right in the Netherlands hit the streets in a massive display of days of public mourning and anger” (2008, 271).

³⁸² LPF is the Dutch acronym for *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*.

results in the 2002 election, despite having been formed only three months earlier. By securing 17% of the vote, and winning 26 seats, the LPF instantly became the second largest party in the *Tweede Kamer* (the Dutch House of Representatives).

Dutch politics was suddenly transformed. Before Fortuyn, post-War Dutch politics had been dominated by the three traditional parties: the centre-right People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)³⁸³; the centrist Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA)³⁸⁴, which formed as a result of a merger between three confessional parties; and the centre-left Labour Party (PvdA)³⁸⁵. For most of the Twentieth Century, the 'Big Three' parties (including, in the case of the CDA, its antecedent parties) continuously received between 75 per cent and 90 per cent of the vote" (Vossen 2011, 179). Yet the Dutch proportional voting system helped ensure no single party ever won enough seats to form government in its own right (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 27). This meant that, as a rule of thumb, the centrist CDA would form a Coalition with either the PvdA or the VVD, depending on whether the electorate had shifted left or right respectively³⁸⁶.

While the LPF soon flamed-out as a political force without its charismatic leader, its 2002 campaign provided a blueprint for how to mobilise a portion of the electorate that felt ignored by the political elite. Fortuyn's lasting legacy was in ushering in a 'populist upsurge' that has dramatically altered the Dutch political landscape (Spitz, Muskens, and van Ewijk 2013, 7)³⁸⁷. Since 2002, the approach pioneered by Fortuyn has been embraced by a sequence of iconoclastic political figures on the right, each of whom have tapped into a growing sense of disaffection and uneasiness within Dutch society. Figures including include Theo van Gogh (assassinated in 2004), Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Rita Verdonk³⁸⁸ and, most relevant to the subject at hand, Geert Wilders, have championed 'anti-establishment' views, most prominently by questioning the role of Islam in Dutch society.

Wilders is considered the populist heir of Pim Fortuyn. Wilders' brash style and disdain for political correctness have garnered him a profile beyond the Netherlands as a right-wing, anti-

³⁸³ VVD is the Dutch acronym for *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*.

³⁸⁴ CDA is the Dutch acronym for *Christen-Democratisch Appèl*.

³⁸⁵ PvdA is the Dutch acronym for *Partij van de Arbeid*.

³⁸⁶ Aside from the period between 1994 and 2002, when a 'purple' coalition ruled the Netherlands, since 1917, "it was the CDA who would decide to govern with the left (PvdA) or with the right (VVD)" (Becker and Cuperus 2010, 7).

³⁸⁷ For an account of "the rise of populist parties in contemporary Dutch politics", see van Kessel (2010b).

³⁸⁸ Rita Verdonk was previously a member of the VVD and was a former minister of integration affairs between 2003 and 2006. After the 2006 parliamentary election, she duelled with Mark Rutte for control of the Party (Vossen 2010, 32). Ultimately, Rutte prevailed in the internal power struggle and Verdonk left to start her own movement, in October 2007, called Proud of the Netherlands and known by its Dutch acronym, TON (*Trots op Nederland*).

Islam populist³⁸⁹. During the 2010 election campaign, for example, Wilders and his Party for Freedom (PVV)³⁹⁰ campaigned on policies including implementing a tax on head scarves, banning the Koran and halting the construction of mosques (Castle 2010; Erk 2011, 110; Hecking 2010). He publicly derided Islam as a “fascist ideology”. Koen Vossen (2011, 187), an expert on the ideological development of Wilders³⁹¹, identifies the PVV leader as a champion of “strident and conspiracist Islamophobia.”

Numerous scholars have noted how the common characterisation of Wilders as a right-wing populist is not entirely satisfying, however³⁹². Contrary to what might be expected from a typical far-right party, the PVV maintains libertarian positions on numerous ethical issues, including the right to abortion, euthanasia and embryo selection (Vossen 2011, 186–87). Wilders’ is also an outspoken proponent of gay rights. To highlight this position, the PVV introduced a resolution in parliament “to allow gay soldiers to wear their military outfit in a gay parade” (Vossen 2011, 187). The PVV is also not as reliably fiscally conservative as might be expected for a ‘right-wing’ party. For example, in its 2010 election platform, the PVV refused to generate savings by raising the minimum age for the pension by two years (Lucardie and Voerman 2011, 1075), despite this policy position being adopted by the three established parties³⁹³.

Wilders’ eclectic policy positions cohere only if they are seen through an anti-establishment lens. This is the key to understanding Wilders, his political priorities, the dynamics of the post-2002 political environment and, most relevant of all, the decline of the Dutch consensus on spending at least 0.7% of GNI on development. As this chapter proceeds, I will progressively elaborate on how Wilders reframed the symbolism of the 0.7% to further his political ends. To do so effectively, however, requires first explaining what is was about the Dutch context that allowed Wilders’ anti-establishment message to resonate in the first place.

³⁸⁹ In coverage of the 2010 Dutch elections, for example, journalists writing for foreign newspapers variously labelled Wilders as “the bogeyman of Dutch politics” (Cendrowicz 2010a), “the nation’s most controversial politician” (Castle and Erlanger 2010), a “Muslim-baiting maverick” (Traynor 2010c) and a “populist firebrand” (Beaumont 2010), a “blond-mulleted Islamophobe” (Beaumont 2010) and an “anti-establishment maverick” (Traynor n.d.).

³⁹⁰ PVA is the Dutch acronym for *Partij voor de Vrijheid*.

³⁹¹ For English language work on Wilders’ ideological development see Vossen (2010, 2011; 2013a)

³⁹² Vossen (2011) examines this question in depth by tracing Wilders’ ideological development. See also Vossen (2010), Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 78–79) and van Kessel (2011, 2010a).

³⁹³ The far-left Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij* in Dutch) also refused to increase the pension age. Hence this policy position is a particularly good example of how the PVV sometimes confounds the generic ‘far-right populist’ label often affixed to it, especially by the international media.

7.1.2 *Consociational Democracy and its Discontents*³⁹⁴

The political culture of the Netherlands differs markedly from Australia and the United Kingdom. Key domestic political differences, including proportional voting, coalition government and consensus-based decisionmaking, are institutional manifestations of a politics of accommodation designed to respond to a singular challenge; successfully governing “a country of minorities” (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 27)³⁹⁵. Dutch politics therefore operates substantially differently to the Westminster systems that operate in Australia and the UK (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 43).

Arend Lijphart’s contribution to political science and comparative politics was triggered by his desire to explain how his native country, despite being characterised by its “extraordinary degree of social cleavage” (1968, 1) was nonetheless able to function “as a stable, effective, and legitimate parliamentary democracy” (1968, 2). His answer was that the Netherlands, alongside and a handful of other similar states, was best defined a ‘consociational democracy’. Lijphart (1969, 216) defined this new term as describing “government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy”. The existence of numerous distinct social cleavages—Dutch society has traditionally been organised into pillars based on religious affiliation in an arrangement known as pillarization—could be compensated at the elite level via consensual decisionmaking (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 39). A ‘politics of accommodation’ emerged—to use another phrase coined by Lijphart (1968, 1975). This consensual mode of governing evolved into what became widely known as the polder model from the 1980s³⁹⁶.

Consociational Democracy delivered peace, prosperity and stability to the Netherlands for a long period (Van Gorp 2012, 184). Indeed, the reflex to negotiate, to seek consensus, and to compromise has become ingrained in Dutch identity (van der Horst 2016, chapter 3). Outsiders have long marvelled at the famous ‘Dutch tolerance’. Ian Buruma, a journalist and author who grew up in the Netherlands, has written about the sense of smugness that was once attached to

³⁹⁴ An extended discussion of the themes that are covered in this subsection of the thesis can be found in chapter 5 of Van Gorp’s (2012) doctoral thesis, which examines the implications of the collapse of consociationalism for the traditional Dutch political parties.

³⁹⁵ This is the title of the second chapter of Andeweg and Irwin’s book *Governance and Politics of the Netherlands*. These authors (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 27) argue that the Netherlands being a “country of minorities... is without doubt the single most important characteristic of Dutch politics.”

³⁹⁶ Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 194) consider the polder model to be a “more informal variety” of the more pronounced ‘corporatism’ that existed in the 1970s and earlier. These authors (2014, 188) define corporatism as “an empirical relationship between interests groups and the government that is based on exchange (influence for support) and cooperation rather than competition.” In this system, “organized interests are incorporate into the policy-making process and define the outcomes to their members” (2014, 189).

the Dutch identity. He describes a “self-congratulatory notion” the Dutch once maintained “of living in the finest, freest, most progressive, most decent, most perfectly evolved playground of multicultural utopianism” (Buruma 2006, 11).

Events of the ‘Long Year of 2002’³⁹⁷ and the subsequent populist upsurge, shattered the notion of the Netherlands as utopia. Characteristic traits of Dutch national identity—tolerance, openness, accommodation, steadiness, stability—were no longer such apt descriptions for the conduct of Dutch national life. Many observers, including several interviewees I spoke with, agree that something in the national psyche was irredeemably altered around this time. For example, Kitty van der Heijden left the Netherlands in 1996 and lived abroad as a diplomat until 2009, when she returned to take up a senior role in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs³⁹⁸. “I came back and honestly didn’t recognise my own country,” van der Heijden told me³⁹⁹. One aspect of the “huge shift in society” she observed related to the changed views on development cooperation. It was “no longer seen as something worthy to contribute your taxpayers’ money to.”

Monique Kramer (2013) has documented how the key demarcations in Dutch society changed around the turn of the Millennium. In the aftermath of World War II, “[t]he organization of politics and daily life was built on religious pillarization” (Kremer 2013, 3), with religious distinctions the dominant social cleavages. While the consociational tradition begun to break down in the 1960s, and accelerated across future decades, nothing had conclusively replaced it as the organising principle of Dutch political life. Beginning in the early 2000s, however, “the twin concepts of *allochtoon* (not from the Netherlands; literally “not from here”⁴⁰⁰) and *autochtoon* (from the Netherlands) came to be perceived as the crucial distinction” (Kremer 2013, 3) in Dutch politics.

A number of factors contributed to the *allochtoon-autochtoon* divide becoming the dominant social cleavage in the Netherlands, at least in political discourse. First, pillarization had been receding for a considerable time. As the Netherlands became increasingly secular, the Dutch population grew increasingly less likely to identify strongly with the previously dominant religious pillars. Second, while the number of persons with a Dutch background has remained

³⁹⁷ For an account of ‘The Long Year of 2002’, the period of “political confusion and shock” between autumn 2001 and spring 2003 see Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 28–30).

³⁹⁸ Amongst various diplomatic postings, van der Heijden spent four years at the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the UN (2001–2005) and UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam (2006–2009).

³⁹⁹ Personal interview, February 2016.

⁴⁰⁰ Kremer (2013, 3) adds the important caveat that “[t]he concept of *allochtoon* also applies to children born in the Netherlands to foreign-born parents”.

steady since 2000, the number of persons with a foreign background has increased by almost 40% to 2017⁴⁰¹. The growth of the Dutch-Moroccan and Dutch-Turk communities garnered particular attention, with these groups now comprising close to 5% of the total population. Third, a dramatic sequence of events in the early to mid-2000s kept Islamic terrorism at the forefront of Dutch national consciousness. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks initially sparked a dramatic increase in the issue attention paid to migration in the Netherlands⁴⁰². Then, only eight months after the Madrid train bombings of March 2004, Theo Van Gogh—“an avid supporter of Pim Fortuyn” (van der Horst 2016, 281)—was shot and stabbed while on his way work to work after producing a short film with Ayaan Hirsi Ali that was critical of Islam⁴⁰³. Then, on 7 July 2005, the London bombings claimed the lives of 54 people (including the four assailants).

In this fluid and uncertain environment, many began to feel that the Dutch way of life was threatened. ‘Government by elite cartel’ was no longer delivering stability. “Citizens who no longer feel ‘at home’ in the Netherlands” explains Kremer (2013, 2), began to voice “their anxieties and [demand] acknowledgement of their concerns from politicians”. For them, the ‘old system’ of Consociational democracy seemed out-of-date, unable to grapple with the fast-moving pace of the globalised world or deal with the new cleavages in Dutch society.

Fortuyn’s great insight was in understanding that many felt the elite establishment was either not listening to their concerns, or too readily dismissed them. His slogan, “At Your Service!” transmitted this understanding by insinuating that the major parties, and the elite generally, were *not* serving the interests of the ordinary Dutch people, whereas he would. Wilders’ readily embraced this theme. “The political elite in the Netherlands systematically ignores the interests and problems of the citizen,” began the Party for Freedom’s manifesto for the 2006 elections, the first national elections Wilders’ new party contested⁴⁰⁴. This statement remains at the core of Wilders’ ongoing appeal, even for voters who do not agree with some of his policies.

One of the crucial issues that the elite systematically ignored, according to Wilders and the PVV, was the impact of non-Western immigration. The PVV’s 2006 manifesto called for a moratorium on “non-Western immigrants (Moroccans and Turks) for 5 years” (note that ‘non-Western

⁴⁰¹ These statistics are drawn from the Statistics Netherlands (2017) online StatLine database.

⁴⁰² According to research by Vliegenthart and Roggeband (2007, 307), September 11 had a strong impact on the attention the Dutch media paid to immigration, caused “a 115 percent increase in issue attention”.

⁴⁰³ See van der Horst (2016, 280–83).

⁴⁰⁴ This manifesto was accessed through the Manifesto Corpus (*The Manifesto Project Data Collection* (version 2016-6) 2016) and translated from Dutch using Google translate. Unless otherwise noted, all other references to party manifestos in this chapter are from the same source.

immigrants' is the English translation for Dutch the term *allochtoon*). This policy resonated politically. As Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 28) recognise, "the greatest discontent waiting to be mobilized... was anxiety over the development of the Netherlands as a multicultural society". What was increasingly stake here, as Wilders was at pains to point out, was the question of Dutch identity.

7.1.3 Who are we? Dutch Identity and the New Symbolism of 0.7%

"National identity has become a highly politicized issue in the Netherlands in the past decade," explains Kremer (2013, 1), "with many public figures voicing different opinions on what it means to be 'Dutch'". Wilders' political success derives from his having such a clear and uncompromising answer to this question. Precisely because the 'Big Three' parties were each internally divided on issues of Dutch identity (Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008; Van Gorp 2012, chapter 8), Wilders' decisiveness worked to set him apart from the 'elite'. This dynamic is well illustrated by recounting an episode that is regularly cited as an example of how contested and politicised the notion of Dutch identity has become⁴⁰⁵.

In September 2007, then-Princess (now Queen) Maxima gave a speech launching a new report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR)⁴⁰⁶, a prestigious and influential independent advisory body to the Dutch government. Maxima was asked to launch *Identification with the Netherlands*⁴⁰⁷ because her personal journey of 'becoming Dutch' appeared to lend an ideal backstory to such an event. An Argentine by birth, Maxima had married then-Prince (now King) Willem-Alexander in 2002.

Maxima's speech faithfully conveyed the report's conclusions (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 14). A key paragraph of the speech relayed how, over the course of her personal journey, Maxima had not uncovered a unique Dutch identity. The Netherlands is "too multifaceted to summarize in one cliché", she said⁴⁰⁸. With a rhetorical flourish, Maxime concluded the paragraph by claiming "The Dutchman does not exist". This comment instantly become a lightning rod for criticism⁴⁰⁹.

⁴⁰⁵ The portion of this chapter recounting Maxima's speech draws from Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 14–15) and the opening chapter of Van Gorp (2012), both of whom use this example to illustrate change in Dutch identity.

⁴⁰⁶ WRR is the Dutch acronym for *Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid*. The WRR is an independent advisory body to the Dutch government whose task is to "advise the government on issues that are of great importance for society."

⁴⁰⁷ The Dutch title of this report was *Identificatie met Nederland* (Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) 2007).

⁴⁰⁸ This quote is taken from Van Gorp's (2012, 1) translation of Maxima's speech.

⁴⁰⁹ According to Van Gorp (2012, 2), the intense reaction to Maxima's speech demonstrated the extent to which "questions of national identity, immigration, and immigrant integration" had become politicised in the Netherlands.

Wilders seized the moment with a typically direct and divisive intervention. Maxima's speech was "well-meant politically correct mumbo-jumbo", he said⁴¹⁰. Wilders' response framed Maxima's comment as another example of the elite being incapable of giving a common-sense response to a straightforward question. On the other hand, political figures from the 'Big Three' parties unwittingly reinforced Wilders' **framing** of the issue by offering nuanced interpretations (Van Gorp 2012, 2). While these more considered responses might have been more responsible, they offered less political 'cut through'.

The inability of the Big Three parties to stake out a clear position on Maxima's comment foreshadowed a broader failing⁴¹¹. As Van Gorp (2012) had demonstrated, the reason the Big Three parties have been unable to stake out clear positions on issues related to the emerging social-cultural cleavage in the Netherlands is because they were internally divided about how to respond to it (Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008). These internal divisions, especially within the CDA especially, would have direct implications for the breakdown of the 0.7% consensus (documented in detail in section 7.3).

While the Big Three parties tended to dismiss discussions of socio-cultural issues as 'symbol politics' (Van Gorp 2012, 370), Wilders embraced this approach. Like Fortuyn, Wilders was willing to brazenly call out these anxieties and propose concrete—if improbable—measures to address them. In fact, Wilder's key policy measures functioned as anti-establishment symbols. A key example is Wilders' policy proposal of banning the wearing of headscarfs. This instantly communicated a very clear political position—that is, Wilders and the PVV opposed the Islamization of Dutch society—while also serving as a reminder of elite inaction on key issues. Another example was Wilders repeated references to 'Henk and Ingrid'—his shorthand for the 'ordinary Dutch' citizens the elite ignored and he was 'fighting for' (Ploumen 2013a, chapter 5). Wilders saw that he could use the 0.7% target in the same way. Once he recognised this potential, he paid more attention to getting **aid policy** on the political agenda, thereby triggering the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock.

The 0.7% target was liable to being reframed because it already existed as a collective symbol of Dutch identity (Van Gorp 2012, 2–3). Achieving (and regularly exceeding) this target since 1975 had come to say something important about who the Netherlands was as a nation.

⁴¹⁰ This quote is taken from Van Gorp's (2012, 1) translation of Wilders' response to Maxima's speech.

⁴¹¹ Four years after Maxima's speech, Van Gorp (2012, 327, 333) asked 51 Dutch politicians whether they agreed with Maxima's statement "The Dutchman does not exist". Responses to this question show how PVV politicians were unified in their opposition to the statement, while politicians from centre-right parties (VVD and CDA) gave variable responses, ranging from full agreement to full disagreement (Van Gorp 2012, 369–70).

Domestically, it testified to the Netherlands' sense of international responsibility, its commitment to global engagement, its ascension to international norms and its standing as an international 'citizen'. Achieving the 0.7% target also symbolised Dutch leadership in development policy internationally⁴¹². It was for this reason that the Dutch abandonment of 0.7% in 2013 shocked the international development community in a way that the contemporaneous aid spending changes in Australia and the UK did not.

Wilders saw the symbolic potential of reframing the 0.7% target relatively late in his political rise. While the PVV had proposed cuts to development cooperation in its 2006 manifesto, it wasn't until after the impact of the Global Financial Crisis that Wilders really began to focus on actively recasting the 0.7% as a symbol of an unresponsive elite consensus. Wilders' critique of the elite began to feature attacks on what he saw as the establishment's misdirected spending priorities, regularly chiding foreign aid as an "expensive left-wing hobby" (van Kessel 2011, 75). Before Parliament he made speeches demanding "the development aid spigot" be "turned off tight" and for the Netherlands to stop "this crazy development aid" (Wilders 2009). The PVV platform ahead of the 2010 parliamentary elections codified Wilders' now definitive position on development policy: Dutch development aid should be scrapped entirely, with only humanitarian aid spared (DutchNews 2010a).

At this point, it needs to be acknowledged that Wilders' stance on development policy was less potent than his anti-Islam and anti-EU policies were, in terms of influencing voter behaviour. Wilders messaging around the 0.7% target is best seen as a factor that reinforces his core political message rather than defines it. That said, Wilders' reframing of 0.7% *was* vitally important for the direction of development policy in the Netherlands. Wilders' attacks put aid on the agenda in a new way and ensured that, by the end of the 2000s, the 0.7% target was no longer sacrosanct (Kranenburg 2010b). In this sense, Wilders' motivation to 'put aid on the agenda' conformed to a classic Type II (indirect) aid salience shock, in which the initiating actor sees an opportunity to politicise aid policy to advance a broader political cause.

⁴¹² Upholding the 0.7% norm when so few other states were willing to do so gave the Netherlands credibility in the development world. Dutch leadership in development was reinforced by its being at the vanguard of policy innovation (Spitz, Muskens, and van Ewijk 2013, 16). The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), in a 2006 peer review of Dutch development assistance, acknowledged that "[t]he Netherlands is viewed within the international donor community as a frontrunner with regard to its ability to adapt to new challenges and to test innovative operational approaches" (OECD DAC 2006b, 11). The Netherlands was at the forefront of the 'good governance' and 'ownership' movements in the 1990s, through the leadership of Jan Pronk (van Gastel and Nuijten 2005). In the 2000s, as the role of development in fragile states became more prominent, the Dutch implemented the 3D approach, which recognised the need for coherence between defence, diplomacy and development policies (Spitz, Muskens, and van Ewijk 2013, 12). The Netherlands was also an early adopter of the MDGs and by 2003 had aligned its development policy to achieving them (OECD DAC 2006b, 11; MFA 2003).

Yet while I consider Wilders' personal influence to be a necessary cause of the downfall of the 0.7% target, it was not sufficient, by itself, to cause the Netherlands to finally abandon it. The erosion of what had long appeared to be an inviolable consensus on development spending was also the product of increased questioning of the 0.7% target by key groups amongst the Dutch elite for a range of other reasons. The shift in views amongst key groups of the elite regarding development spending is the focus of the forthcoming section.

§§§

7.2 Cracks Emerge in the Development Consensus: Questioning the Relevance of 0.7%

In the Netherlands, giving aid has always been such a self-evident thing. It was just something we did. There was no question about it. We just did it.

—Gabi Spitz, 2014⁴¹³

[T]he broad consensus regarding foreign aid spending has been upended.

—Mark Kranenburg, *NRC Handelsbald*, 2010

The domestic, political and social cross-currents that buffeted Dutch politics from the early 2000s took some time to begin to noticeably impact Dutch development policy. This testifies to the strength of the historical hold of the 0.7% norm. The notion that the Netherlands would spend 0.7% or more on development was so ingrained that it took some time before this position was seriously questioned. “It was just something we did”, Gabi Spitz told me. Yet as Dutch society and the international environment changed rapidly, the self-evidence of meeting and exceeding the 0.7% target began to be questioned.

⁴¹³ Personal interview, November 2014.

This section of the chapter charts how, in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis, pressure began to mount on the longstanding Dutch ‘development consensus’. Specifically, serious questions began to be asked about how defensible the ongoing pursuit of the 0.7% target was from three important and interlinked perspectives: a development perspective; a foreign policy orientation perspective; and a political strategy perspective. The three subsections that follow address each of these perspectives in turn.

7.2.1 Elite questions: The Impact of ‘Less Pretension, More Ambition’

By the middle of the 2000s, there was growing recognition within the Dutch development sector that the dramatic post-Fortuyn changes in society would irreversibly alter the development landscape⁴¹⁴. Much less obvious was how best to respond. Rather than prompting a coordinated response from the sector, the imminent threat generated a sense of paralysis. According to Spitz, Muskens, and van Ewijk (2013, 13), “[t]he fear that there was nothing to gain and much to lose... prevented a fundamental debate on the future of Dutch aid”.

Pieter van Lieshout had a different view. A council member of the Scientific Council (WRR), van Lieshout believed that the circumstances in the mid-2000s made actively discussing and debating the future of the development consensus imperative⁴¹⁵. He began lobbying his WRR council colleagues about the need to thoroughly examine Dutch development policy, with a view to publishing a substantial report to decisively influence the debate. It took 18 months for van Lieshout to persuade his council colleagues. Once they acquiesced, a project group was formed, led by van Lieshout and also including Robert Went and Monique Kremer.

The group’s final report, *Less Pretension, More Ambition: Development Policy in Times of Globalization* (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010) was published in Dutch in January 2010⁴¹⁶. The report was explicitly framed as a response to the breakdown of the development consensus in the Netherlands. “[T]he self-evidence of development aid— about which there had long been broad political and social consensus [in the Netherlands]—seemed to have come to a definite end” (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 7). While domestic considerations weighed heavily

⁴¹⁴ For example, CDA MP Kathleen Ferrier was keenly aware of the imperative to reform Dutch development cooperation, even writing a book on development cooperation in 2006, “to convince my party that a new perspective on development cooperation” was needed (Personal interview with Kathleen Ferrier, October 2016).

⁴¹⁵ Robert Went recalled van Lieshout as saying, around this time, that: “I see more and more and I hear more and more that there’s no consensus on [the role of development aid]. Development aid is breaking down and we never discuss that and that’s a bad sign because it means that people, they don’t really express anymore what they think about it.”

⁴¹⁶ In November 2010, an expanded and updated English version was published. All references are from the English version.

in the minds of the project group, the report was also framed as a response to two shifts at the international level: the changes underway in the international aid regime; and the intensification of the globalisation process. For the WRR team, the dual impetus of the breakdown in domestic consensus and the rapidly changing international environment meant that it was crucial “to thoroughly reflect on the future of development aid” (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 13).

The publication of *Less Pretension, More Ambition* was highly anticipated⁴¹⁷. Quite apart from the depth and scope of the report’s analysis⁴¹⁸, the fact that the report was published by the WRR lent it instant credibility and authority⁴¹⁹. But the key reason why *Less Pretension, More Ambition* “succeeded in shaking up the aid debate” (Bieckmann 2010, 4) was because it challenged the prevailing orthodoxy. Most provocatively, it questioned the ongoing relevance of the 0.7% target.

Less Pretension, More Ambition’s questioning of the ongoing relevance of the 0.7% target derived from the project teams’ underlying assessment that the “classical approach to aid was nearing the end of its lifecycle” (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 264)⁴²⁰. The report argued that the 0.7% standard “suits an isolated system of aid while development in an increasingly interdependent world depends more and more on other issues” (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 271). The WRR recommended that the Netherlands work at formulating a new, more relevant, replacement for the 0.7% standard, thus challenging relevance of the 0.7% target not just for the Netherlands, but for the DAC itself (this issue is discussed further in chapter 8). In summary, the WRR presented a nuanced and sophisticated argument that Dutch development assistance needed to adapt to new realities in the

⁴¹⁷ Writing in December 2009, following Boekestijn’s book launch, Kranenburg (2009) recorded that “[a]ll parties involved are nervously awaiting a report that government think tank WRR will be publishing halfway through next month. Not only will it contain an appraisal of Dutch development aid policy, the WRR will also weigh in on the fundamental international discussion regarding the principals supporting development aid.”

⁴¹⁸ As well as conducting an exhaustive review of the literature, commissioning a series of studies about the impact of globalisation on development policy (Kremer, Lieshout, and Went 2009), hosting a number of conferences and completing a series of seven country studies and an extensive program of international working visits, the small WRR team also interviewed over 300 specialists during a two-year period (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 7–8). Including interlocutors from international visits, the team canvassed the views of around 600 individuals. For contemporary reviews of *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, see Hoebink (2011) and Bremen (2011).

⁴¹⁹ Professor Paul Hoebink, writing in *The Netherlands Yearbook on International Cooperation 2008* (published in the autumn of 2009), acknowledged this point when, in looking forward to the potential for “promising debates” in 2010, he reasoned that “Development cooperation will draw special attention [in 2010], because the most important advisory bodies of the Dutch government [i.e. SER and WRR] will study and advice [sic] on it” (Hoebink 2009, 15–16)

⁴²⁰ It was now clear, argued the authors, that “development only depends on aid to a very limited extent” and that contributions to the development process can only ever be modest (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 273). They counselled further embrace of the ‘beyond aid agenda’. Development policy should address global problems that are not only borderless, but ultimately will have profound and outsized impacts on those living in poverty. Instead of bilateral arrangements focused on poverty reduction projects, the focus of national policy should be in contribution to transnational issues (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 260).

aid regime and its less influential role in the world. And a key part of that adaptation was to put less emphasis on the volume of aid spending⁴²¹.

While the Dutch ‘elite’ could shrug off Wilders’ rejection of the 0.7% target as opportunistic populism, the WRR’s conclusion was much less easily rebuffed. The WRR’s challenge to the development consensus transformed the debate precisely because it was a message delivered to the elite *by* the elite⁴²². While the WRR’s rationale for questioning the 0.7% was much more sophisticated and evidence-based than Wilders’, this distinction was entirely lost on the ordinary voter. The symbolism the 0.7% target recently acquired through Wilders’ reframing efforts meant that, in the political moment the report was published in, questioning the 0.7% target was akin to questioning validity of development cooperation itself.

The media understood that *Less Pretension, More Ambition* had let the 0.7% genie out of the bottle. News coverage surrounding the report’s publication speculated on the impact it would have on the future of the 0.7% target. For example, Kranenburg (2010a) saw that the future of the “sacrosanct 0.7 percent figure” was under threat, given how “the WRR considers the [0.7% target to be] of limited significance but most political parties in the Netherlands have long decided living up to this promise is a matter of civilisation.” Kranenburg presciently observed that “[t]he fallout from the report will undoubtedly concern mainly this question.” Numerous interviewees I spoke with were critical of the WRR for what they viewed as their naivety in how their questioning of the 0.7% target would be interpreted by the media and leveraged by Wilders and other anti-development figures⁴²³.

Yet Robert Went, one of the report’s authors, relayed to me how WRR Council *was* aware of how controversial their position on the 0.7% target would be and agonised about it internally before approving publication of *Less Pretension, More Ambition*. Right up until the day before

⁴²¹ “It is not the quantity but the quality of our contribution to a world in which people and countries are self-sufficient and in which international public goods are adequately safeguarded, that should be the point of departure for what we now still refer to as ‘development aid’, but perhaps later ‘global development’” (van Lieshout, Went, and Kremer 2010, 273).

⁴²² According to Professor Rolph van der Hoeven, then chair of the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs’ (AIV) working group responsible for drafting the response to the WRR report, *Less Pretension, More Ambition* “hit a nerve” because it “came [from] outside the normal world; the normal development world that everybody knows. They saw that this was the Scientific Council, and so that’s why it hit a special nerve” (Personal interview, November 2014).

⁴²³ In an observation that chimed with observations of others, Professor Rolph van der Hoeven suggested that “people could take things out of [the report] that suited themselves” (Personal interview, November 2014). Professor Wil Hout had a similar reaction, noting that these reports are always “used for a political purpose” (Personal interview, November 2014). Frans Bieckmann went a little further, suggesting that it wasn’t the WRR’s purpose to ‘open it up [the debate] in [the] way’ that ultimately transpired (Personal interview, November 2014). In Bieckmann’s view, the WRR erred in not being aware of how powerful interests would interpret parts from their report. Partly, this was because the WRR was more concerned with being an agenda setter and that it likes to be seen in that way. Their fundamental objective, recounted Bieckmann, was “in creating debate.”

the decision to publish the report was made, Went explained, “there [were WRR] Council members who said that ‘this cannot be published like this because if we don’t defend the 0.7%, we’re out’. So that was the big strategic decision.” The fact the publication of the report was in the balance indicates just how politically loaded the symbolism of the 0.7% target had become. Went had commenced the project convinced in his own mind that the final report would recommend raising development spending beyond the 0.7% target. But as he digested the evidence over time, he began to change his mind. At one point in the project, Went recalls reaching a turning point:

I couldn’t sleep for several nights... because I began to agree with something that I was totally different about and I always voted differently about it so I really—that’s one of the things that you have to learn here, you have to be able to change your mind on things because... and I really tried because that was one of the things I was assigned to do—to go figure out what do we really know about the effects of the 0.7%... And I read everything that existed throughout the world and I could not find a real rationale for this [target].⁴²⁴”

The traumatic nature of Went’s ‘loss of faith’ testifies to the powerful hold of the 0.7% target⁴²⁵. Went’s personal story also pre-empts the journey his country would take. Both Went and the Netherlands began from a starting point of unquestioned belief in 0.7%. Both then experienced a ‘crisis of faith’ involving repeated questioning of the target’s relevance. And both ultimately came to reject the 0.7%. At the time *Less Pretension, More Ambition* was published in early 2010, however, Dutch commitment to the 0.7% target still appeared relatively secure—the decision to abandon 0.7% was still more than two years away. In retrospect, however, closely related questions about Dutch identity that would also undermine the development consensus were also gnawing at the body politic. One of these questions involved the orientation of Dutch foreign policy.

7.2.2 Foreign Policy Questions: ‘The Struggle against the Water’

A defining paradox of Dutch national identity pairs the strong internationalist strain in Dutch political and social history with a countervailing instinct to withdraw from the world at times. The ‘struggle against the water’ is the phrase sometimes used to illustrate this core conundrum of Dutch foreign policy (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 3–5)⁴²⁶. Holland’s famous dikes are representative of the Dutch skill in managing its interactions with the outside world to its

⁴²⁴ Personal interview with Robert Went, November 2014.

⁴²⁵ Went’s personal journey infused the report with something of a convert’s zeal. His earlier beliefs gave him insight as to how to pitch the argument to those sceptical that the 0.7% target should be abandoned.

⁴²⁶ For a more general perspective on the Dutch ‘struggle against the water’ see van der Horst (2016, chapter 2). For a contemporary overview of Dutch foreign policy since World War II, see Kaarbo (2013, chapter 4)

advantage, but they also serve as constant reminders of the vigilance that is necessary to ensure it is never overwhelmed, unexpectedly, by forces outside its borders.

Throughout history, the Dutch have been keenly aware that the world beyond their borders is both the source of their prosperity *and* their vulnerability. The Dutch Golden Age during the 17th century was built by cultivating the conditions and institutions that were conducive for open trade and finance (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 12). These same conditions were also conducive to intellectual flourishing, with Hugo Grotius, one of the fathers of international law, the most famous beneficiary. The legacy of the Dutch Golden Age has decisively shaped the Netherlands of the present. Amsterdam remains a symbol of Dutch tolerance and is a global financial centre. The Hague is the leading centre for international law, while Rotterdam is Europe's largest port.

Yet while the Netherlands remains one of the most connected countries in the world⁴²⁷, the urge to 'retreat behind the dikes' has intensified since the early 2000s. This impulse has been especially evident in a segment of the population Kremer (2013, 4) refers to as "voters from the periphery", a group that comprises the core constituency of the PVV (and, earlier, the LPF). The stereotypical 'voter from the periphery' is male, has a relatively low level of education, is aged over 55, and lives outside of the "economic, cultural and governmental heart of the Netherlands" (Kremer 2013, 4). The sense of dislocation this group experiences has been exacerbated by the rapid pace of global change. According to Kremer (2013, 8), globalisation has "opened up a new demarcation line between those who feel they are not in control and do not have a 'grip' over their lives, and those who are able to cope with diversity"⁴²⁸.

Wilders politicised these fault lines. His anti-immigration, anti-Islam and anti-EU positions appealed to voters for whom 'retreating behind the dikes' appeared the safest option. The impact of the global financial crisis served to render the demarcating line between internationalists and nationalists even more starkly. The 'credit crunch' following the GFC resulted in a four per cent contraction in the Dutch economy during 2009 (CPB and PBL 2010, 2), reinforcing the notion that the Netherlands was being overwhelmed by uncontrollable outside forces. The ensuing Greek debt crisis only heightened these anxieties (Traynor 2010b). In response, Wilder's positioned himself as capable of 'taking back control'.

⁴²⁷ Knapen et al (2011, 16) argue that "virtually no other country in the world it as reliant on its international connections as the Netherlands."

⁴²⁸ Likewise, the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), in their 2009 Annual Report, observed that "a schism seems to have developed in Dutch society between the long-established group that supports active internationalism and other groups in society that believe the Netherlands should keep out of international entanglements as much as possible" (AIV 2009, 5).

The ratcheting up of domestic political competition increased the incentives for Dutch political parties to stake out positions that differed from the ‘establishment’ view—a dynamic that was particularly evident in the 2010 election campaign (see subsection 7.2.3)⁴²⁹. The emerging breakdown of the Dutch foreign policy consensus drew the attention of the WRR, just as the breakdown in the development consensus had. Once again, an internal project group was formed within the WRR, this time led by Professor Ben Knapen. As we will discover later, this was significant, as Knapen would later be appointed as State Secretary (junior minister) for European Affairs and International Cooperation.

The Dutch version of *Attached to the World: On the Anchoring and Strategy of Dutch Foreign Policy* was published on 30 November 2010⁴³⁰. Like its sister publication *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, it was framed as a response to the break-down of a previously self-evident consensus⁴³¹. *Attached to the World* recognised the “growing tension between [the] feeling of being threatened by the outside world and the need to nurture the relationship with that same world” (Knapen et al. 2011, 7). Nonetheless, the WRR comes down emphatically on the side of ‘engagement’ in its recommendations, concluding that the Netherlands’ “international orientation is and remains a crucial source of prosperity and well-being” (Knapen et al. 2011, 107). The report is also unambiguously pro-Europe, arguing that “it should be accepted across the board that, for the Netherlands, Europe is the most important international arena for taking initiatives and agenda-setting” (Knapen et al. 2011, 59).

It reflects the strikingly deliberate and consensual nature of Dutch policymaking that *Attached to the World* was merely one of a suite of investigations devoted to understanding how the Netherlands should best respond to the rapidly changing global environment⁴³². Yet these

⁴²⁹ Verbeek and Van Der Vleuten (2008, 375) have demonstrated how the “character of Dutch foreign policy-making has changed” as “the Dutch political elite is increasing divided over foreign policy issues” as “more domestic actors with more diverging opinions have to be satisfied” (2008, 375).

⁴³⁰ An English version was published in May 2011, and is the version which I reference.

⁴³¹ The report explained how “[Dutch] foreign policy was predominantly founded on a basis of permissive consensus. Government elites could develop and implement foreign policy, knowing that there was a general consensus about the direction of foreign policy. This consensus, however, is no longer self-evident” (Knapen et al. 2011, 111).

⁴³² In a position paper attached to the proceedings of an important conference titled *Power Shifts in a Changing World Order* (The Dutch Senate et al. 2011), the then head of strategic research at Clingendael Institute, Jan Rood, observed that “The debate on the impact of these global power shifts and of the emerging international agenda has already started in the Netherlands.” For example, the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands—SER, or *Sociaal-Economische Raad* is the “best known and most important” (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 191) of the policy advisory organisations in the Netherlands—published *On Sustainable globalisation: a world to be won* in 2008. This report was also very pro-Europe, arguing that “the Netherlands needs the European Union if it is to operate from a position of strength in the globalisation process” (SER 2008, 20). The WRR considered the need to revise the strategic orientation of Dutch foreign policy (WRR 2010). On 4 February 2011, a conference called *Power shifts in a changing world order*, was jointly convened by the Dutch Senate, WRR, the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV), and the Clingendael Institute of International Relations. This quadrumvirate of organisations essentially equates to the Netherlands’ foreign policy establishment. Their joint hosting of such a conference not only provides a demonstration of the consensual, elite-dominated nature of Dutch decisionmaking, it also reveals just how central

studies all reached the same broad conclusion that *Attached to the World* did: the Netherlands needed to double-down on its outward looking orientation to navigate the rapid external challenges it presently faced. The coalescence of the policy establishment around this view reinforced the feeling that a schism had formed in Dutch society concerning how to interact with the outside world.

The 2010 election campaign illustrated the extent to which two distinct camps with two distinct visions for the future of the Netherlands had emerged. A speech by then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and future CDA leader, Maxime Verhagen at Radboud University, Nijmegen, during the 2010 election campaign illustrates this. Verhagen's long speech⁴³³ was a response to a letter written by Edward Gebuis (quoted in Verhagen 2010) that was published in *Metro*, a free newspaper:

"Maxime Verhagen shows why populism has won such a huge following. Mr Verhagen says we should maintain our international orientation. But the people, who, after all, should have the final say in a democracy, want us to straighten things out in our own country before turning our focus back to the EU, development cooperation and peace missions. Parties like the Freedom Party (PVV) arise out of dissatisfaction with the present course. Stubbornly sticking to that course only breeds more dissatisfaction, and thus greater support for the populists."

Verhagen responded by making case for the Netherlands to "stay internationally active". "Retreating behind the dikes will not help" he argued (Verhagen 2010), stressing that "defending wider Dutch interests... requires an internationalist outlook." Verhagen's speech distils the essence of the practical political impact Wilders was having on Dutch policy. Here was the Dutch Foreign Minister, in the middle of an election campaign, feeling obliged explicitly counter Wilders' 'behind the dikes' strategy. Wilders, it is clear, was driving the political and media agenda.

Yet this episode also shows how the tradition of adhering to the 0.7% target had also become an intrinsic component of the Dutch internationalist vision. The cleavages that emerged around whether to 'retreat behind the dikes', meant the 0.7% target acquired another layer of symbolism. Not only could Wilders frame maintaining high levels of aid spending as an expensive

the issue of the Netherlands response to the changing world order had become for this group. It is notable that a summary of *Attached to the World* is included as an appendix to the conference proceedings. Also notable is the address from former Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, a quintessential establishment figure and member of the CDA. The conclusion to his address perfectly distils the strongly held policy preferences, and prevailing concerns, of the Dutch foreign policy elite: "The Netherlands is an active international player and must remain so. Turning inward would be a very risky strategy for a country like the Netherlands. We cannot live without Europe. Our future lies in Europe. Our future lies abroad. A global approach is the only way we can tackle the issues of today: climate change, free trade, energy, and so forth. It is the only way we can address difficult issues like human rights. And the only way we can deal with power shifts in a changing world order" (The Dutch Senate et al. 2011, 30–31).

⁴³³ The speech was over 4000 words.

elite hobby, but 0.7% also now functioned as a symbol of the elite's reflexive internationalist orientation, an orientation that Wilders characterised as taking control away from ordinary Dutch citizens. The implications of bearing this extra symbolic weight became evident as the 2010 election campaign progressed, as the coming subsection discusses.

7.2.3 Political Questions: Development Cooperation in the 2010 election campaign

The 2010 election campaign represents a critical juncture in the history of Dutch development policy. Whereas in previous elections, the '0.7% figure', had been "sacrosanct" for the major parties (Kranenburg 2010b), 2010 marked the first time the manifesto of a major traditional party did not support the 0.7% target⁴³⁴. Here was the most tangible evidence yet that "the broad consensus regarding foreign aid spending [had] been upended" (Kranenburg 2010b).

It was not a surprise that it was the VVD that was the first of the 'Big Three' to abandon 0.7% orthodoxy. The right-wing constituency of the VVD was the most ideologically opposed to development cooperation and key party figures had periodically questioned the Dutch position. For example Frits Bolkestein, the VVD leader from 1990-98, "enjoyed drawing attention to taboos" (Ploumen 2013a, 25), including the effectiveness of development cooperation. Bolkestein was a mentor to Wilders when he first entered politics and there are clear parallels between the iconoclastic styles of the two men. (Wilders was originally elected to parliament as a member of the VVD in 1998 and for eight years prior to this worked as a party official alongside Bolkestein)⁴³⁵. In the early 2000s, another activist VVD politician, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, also criticised development cooperation.

The telling precursor to the VVD decision to abandon the 0.7% target in their 2010 manifesto came in September 2008, when, for the "first time in decades" (van Os 2008), the volume of money set aside for development cooperation was publicly questioned during parliamentary debate on the 2009 budget. The questioning was led by the aid-sceptic VVD parliamentarian Arend Jan Boekstijn. He was credited with 'masterminding' his party's new approach to development policy (van Os 2008), which maintained that the development cooperation budget should be lowered in line with the European average, implying around a 50% cut to expenditure (van Os 2008).

⁴³⁴ Elsewhere, Kranenburg (2010a) has written that 0.7 is a "holy number" and that "most political parties in the Netherlands have long decided living up to this promise is a matter of civilisation."

⁴³⁵ For more details on this period, see Vossen (2013a, 24–27). See also Van Gorp (2012, 44) on how Bolkestein's framing of immigrant integration was a precursor to Wilders' approach.

Crucially, Boekestijn's questioning was backed up in public by VVD leader (and future Prime Minister) Mark Rutte. Responding to press questions about his Party's new position on development cooperation, Rutte argued that "we're buying off a guilty conscience and it has to stop" (van Os 2008). The timing of the VVD's departure from orthodoxy is instructive. Boekestijn's initial intervention in parliamentary debate came just after Lehman Brothers collapsed, sending global financial markets into panic, and increasing the incentives for political parties, especially those on the right, to demonstrate how they would cut spending.

Boekestijn continued to argue for less aid spending throughout 2009, culminating with the publication of his anti-aid treatise in December⁴³⁶. The launch of Boekestijn's *The Price of a Bad Conscience* provided journalist Mark Kranenburg (2009), a columnist for the daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, with the opportunity to reflect on the rapidly change status of the development policy debate in the Netherlands:

"[T]he position of development aid in the Dutch political landscape... seemed unassailable until recently. For decades, the subject was taboo. Development aid was simply the civilised thing to do, or so a stable majority in Dutch politics thought. This moral tenet has been laid down in the budgetary rule that 0.8 per cent of annual GDP is to be spent on development aid. The consensus over this matter has been steadily deteriorating in recent years however. Starting with the populist right PVV, more and more political parties have started to voice criticism of development aid."

Wilders opposition to development spending had initially seemed outrageous. Yet in clearly and repeatedly voicing his opposition to 0.7%, he lay the groundwork for others, like Boekestijn, to join him. Once the impact of the 'credit crunch' following the GFC began to be bite—the Dutch economy contracted by four per cent in 2009 (CPB and PBL 2010, 2)—it became even more politically acceptable to question the high levels of Dutch aid spending. In this way, the impact of international level factors were translating in aid policy decisionmaking.

The election campaign triggered by the fall of Balkenende IV government in February 2010⁴³⁷, starkly demonstrated the new political calculus around the 0.7%. The 2010 campaign was dominated by how the major parties responded to two major questions: how rapidly to institute

⁴³⁶ Boekestijn resigned from parliament weeks prior to his book being launched after sharing details of a closed meeting between the Dutch queen and selected members of parliament" (Kranenburg 2010a). Boekestijn declined to be interviewed for this research.

⁴³⁷ On 20 February 2010, Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende called Queen Beatrix to tender his coalition government's resignation (Batty 2010). The two major parties comprising the fourth Balkenende coalition – Balkenende's CDA and the PvdA – had been unable to agree about extending Dutch troop deployments in Afghanistan, leading Labour Minister's to resign (Batty 2010; Aarts and van der Kolk 2011, 577–78). For an overview of these events, see Kaarbo (2013, Loc 1996–2166). Upon the PvdA's withdrawal from Balkenende IV, a caretaker government comprising the CDA and its remaining coalition partner, the Christian Union (CU), was installed and a General Election scheduled for 9 June (van Kessel 2010b, 2).

austerity measures⁴³⁸; and how to respond to the controversial policies of Geert Wilders. With international affairs playing a limited role in the election, development cooperation was not a salient issue (Kranenburg 2010b; Lucardie and Voerman 2011, 1073). Nonetheless, we can detect in the shifting development policies of the major parties the growing influence of the PVV. Wilders' appeal to right-wing voters was pressuring the centre-right parties to adjust their policies, especially on issues where the PVV had generated considerable issue ownership (Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008).

The VVD's manifesto called for the development budget to be cut in half, from 0.8% to 0.4% of GNP (DutchNews 2012b). On the other hand, the centre-left PvdA, unambiguously advocated for the development cooperation budget to be held steady at 0.8%. Most revealing of the fragile state of the consensus on development spending, however, were the policy positions of the CDA. The equivocation detectable in the development policy sections of the CDA manifesto suggested the CDA was wavering in its longstanding commitment to spending 0.8% of GNI on development cooperation.

In a pre-election column for *NRC Handelsblad*, Mark Kranenburg (2010b) highlighted discrepancies in the CDA's election documents. Some appeared to be promising a development cooperation budget of 0.7%, while others pointed to maintaining 0.8%. In any case, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CBP)⁴³⁹, analysis of the platforms of the parties contesting the election, calculated that that implementing the CDA platform would *reduce* expenditure on development cooperation (CPB and PBL 2010, 22). But it was not only on development spending where the CDA manifesto deviated from tradition. During the campaign, the CDA also advocated moving away from the longstanding policy of having a standalone cabinet-level post for Development Cooperation. During his foreign policy speech at Radboud University highlighted in the previous subsection (7.2.2), Maxime Verhagen argued that a more integrated approach to foreign policy was needed. He suggested that "a single minister who

⁴³⁸ While all the major political parties - with the exception of the Socialist Party (SP) - agreed that austerity measures were necessary, they argued about the speed at which spending cuts should be implemented (Kickert 2012, 442; van Holsteyn 2011, 415; van Kessel 2010b, 3–4). The positions of the parties on cost cutting generally reflected their position on the political spectrum, with these differences fuelling the campaign. While "the parties of the right generally aimed at quicker and bigger steps towards restoring the state's finances", those on the left "tended to prioritize economic recovery" (Aarts and van der Kolk 2011, 579). Of the three major established parties, the right-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) supported relatively severe cuts over a short timeframe to revive the economy. The VVD's package of proposed cuts amounted to €20 billion over four years, generating the majority of these savings via €12 billion in cuts to social security (CPB and PBL 2010, 17–18). The socio-democratic PvdA was conscious of ensuring cuts would not affect lower income groups, with its program forecasted to deliver €11 billion in savings over the coming electoral cycle. For example, the PvdA supported reducing the tax deductions of mortgage payments, which the other established parties opposed (Lucardie and Voerman 2011, 1073). The CDA positioned itself between the VVD and the PvdA, striving to present "themselves as the 'reasonable' alternative" to the other major parties (van Kessel 2010b, 8).

⁴³⁹ CBP is the Dutch acronym for *Centraal Planbureau*.

would be able to shape our foreign policy (including development cooperation) could be the way forward” (Verhagen 2010). Ultimately, the CDA’s platform—like the VVD’s—argued for establishing a single ministerial post for international relations (Kranenburg 2010b). This move signalled that the CDA saw the need to reform Dutch development cooperation, even if it sought to hold onto the 0.7% spending target.

As the 2010 election date neared, it was clear the Dutch development consensus was significantly weaker than it had been at the previous election in 2006, when Wilders’ PVV first won representation in the *Tweede Kamer*. This section of the chapter has shown how the ongoing validity of the 0.7% target was being questioned not only on political grounds, but also from a development perspective and a foreign policy orientation perspective. While other factors were playing a role, the ‘elite hobby’ aid salience shock was central to the ongoing erosion of support for maintaining the longstanding aid spending trajectory at 0.7%. As we now shift our focus to examining aid policy-related events during the Rutte I Government, the political ramifications of this constant erosion of support begin to manifest themselves more clearly.

7.3 The Development Consensus (Barely) Holds: The Disappearing Political Centre and the divided Christian Democrats

What you see in this country is two things: a fragmentation of the political landscape and at the same time an erosion of the political centre where compromises are made.

—Ben Knapen, 2016⁴⁴⁰

This consensus building way of conducting politics is completely gone.

—Kathleen Ferrier, 2016⁴⁴¹

In this section, I examine the “erosion of the political centre” (in the words of the Knapen epigraph above) and the implications this had for the future of maintaining the 0.7% target. I do

⁴⁴⁰ Personal Interview, October 2016.

⁴⁴¹ Personal Interview, October 2016.

this by examining the factional discord in the CDA over three subsections. First, I trace how the prospect of partnering with Wilders' PVV split the CDA. I then show how the uncertainty in the CDA about how to respond to the new political environment was reflected in how development policy was enacted during the Rutte I period. Finally, I chart how internal divisions in the CDA around the 0.7% target contributed to the collapse of the Rutte I government. Charting these developments illustrates the ever-increasing pressure placed on 0.7% by the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock.

7.3.1 *Forced to Choose: Wilders splits the CDA*

The results of the 2010 election reflected how the Dutch political landscape had been transformed in the space of a decade. The elections were a disaster for the CDA, who recorded its worst performance since the Party's founding in 1977. By receiving just 13.6% of the national vote, the CDA saw its representation in the *Tweede Kamer* reduced from 41 to just 21, relegating them to being only the fourth largest party. With 24 seats (15.5% of the vote), Wilders' PVV gained 15 seats to suddenly become the third largest party. By adding 9 seats to its 2006 result, the VVD became the largest party, eclipsing the PvdA by just one seat (30 to 31). These results not only showed a rightward shift in the electorate, but also how fragmentary Dutch politics had become⁴⁴².

The unusual electoral realities set the stage for a challenging coalition formation process⁴⁴³. Suddenly, the all-consuming political question was whether the major parties would countenance entering into a coalition agreement with Wilders' PVV. While all the all major parties were internally divided on this question, the CDA was the most conflicted (Van Gorp 2012, 319)⁴⁴⁴. "After the 2010 parliamentary elections", observed Van Gorp (2012, 328), "it became clear for all to see how internally divided the CDA was over the socio-cultural dimension." The rise of the far-right was making it exceedingly difficult for the CDA to navigate its usual terrain in the 'pivotal centre'⁴⁴⁵ of Dutch politics.

⁴⁴² First, the three traditional parties together obtained only a 55.6 per cent of the vote, the lowest level in history at that point. Second, the largest party (the VVD) had never before won such a small share of the national vote—the VVD obtained 20.5% of votes, pipping the PvdA, with 19.6% (Aarts and van der Kolk 2011, 580). Finally, seven parties won ten or more seats, adding further layers of complexity to prospective coalition arrangements.

⁴⁴³ "At the time of the fall of Cabinet Balkenende IV", recalled van Holsteyn (2011, 416) "no one would have predicted the results of 9 June" One major newspaper, the day after the election, ran the headline 'Fragmented country makes formation complicated' (van Holsteyn 2011, 417).

⁴⁴⁴ Rutte also faced opposition within the VVD as a result of his proposed partnership with the PVV. For example, senior VVD leaders, including former cabinet ministers Frits Korthals Altes and Pieter Winsemius, criticised the intended cooperation with Wilders at a party meeting around the time the Coalition Agreement was published (RNW 2010).

⁴⁴⁵ This term is borrowed from Dutch electoral expert Andrew Krouwel (2012).

The CDA's disastrous electoral performance led long-serving Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende to resign as party leader on election night (van Holsteyn 2011, 416). Balkenende's successor, Maxime Verhagen, struggled to establish his authority over deeply divided party during the long government formation process that stretched across the summer and into autumn. Three months into the coalition-forming negotiations, the CDA's internal divisions spilled prominently into the public domain in late August, as press reports emerged in late August that Ab Klink—Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport in the previous Cabinet (Balkenende IV) and Verhagen's offsider in the coalition-forming negotiations—would not accept partnering with Wilders (DutchNews 2010b). After a week of intrigue, Klink announced his decision to resign on 6 September (DutchNews 2010c; Van Gorp 2012, 310).

"You legitimize the PVV-vision and give it support [by governing with them]" explained Klink in an interview with *de Volkskrant* following his decision. Klink expressed his concern that the PVV's stances "against mass-immigration, against Islam, and against Muslims" was systematically excluding Muslims from Dutch society. "Due to repetition", worried Klink, Muslims were being "given the stigma of being a risk factor" (Ab Klink, quoted in Van Gorp 2012, 310). Klink's decision to resign, and his explanation for it, are another powerful testament as to how divisive, yet politically powerful, Wilders' framing of Dutch political debate had become.

Despite the defection of his number two, Verhagen persevered with cabinet forming negotiations. The political settlement that eventually emerged in late September—the government formation process took 127 days, the longest since the first Van Agt Coalition in 1977 (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 147)⁴⁴⁶—was "a new phenomenon in Dutch politics" (van Holsteyn 2011, 417)⁴⁴⁷. Essentially, the VVD and CDA agreed to form a minority government, with support in parliament from the PVV (Castle 2010)⁴⁴⁸. This configuration gave the coalition the slimmest possible majority in the *Tweede Kamer*—76 members in the 150 seat Parliament.

⁴⁴⁶ During the summer of 2010, a sequence of *informatuurs*—senior political figures appointed to conduct negotiations between potential coalition partners—tried and failed to assemble a coalition (Aarts and van der Kolk 2011, 580). The impasse was broken in early August when the VVD and CDA began serious discussions on forming a minority government, to be supported in parliament by the PVV (Castle 2010). For more detail on the sequence of *informatuurs* appointed to explore potential coalition options, see Lucardie and Voerman (2011, 1075). Until 2010, the Monarch was responsible for appointing *informateurs*. A new procedure was approved by Parliament in 2012 which reduced the Monarch's role (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 142–43). For further details on the Procedures of Cabinet Formation in the Netherlands, see Andeweg and Irwin (2014, 141–46) and *The Dutch Political System in a Nutshell*, a joint publication of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) and *Instituut voor Publiek en Politiek* (2008, chapter 5).

⁴⁴⁷ The political settlement that emerged challenged existing definitions of government in the Netherlands. Not only was this the first Liberal-led government since 1918 (Pignal 2010), it was first minority administration since the Second World War (Cendrowicz 2010b).

⁴⁴⁸ Dutch political scientist Joop van Holsteyn (2011, 417) has described the outcome as follows. "The VVD and CDA reached agreement to form a government while the PVV agreed to support this government on a number of major points, but the PVV did not contribute ministers to the cabinet. The cabinet is therefore either a minority

Despite the publication of a VVD-CDA Coalition Agreement, *Freedom and Responsibility* (VVD and CDA 2010)⁴⁴⁹ on 30 September, the involvement of the CDA was provisional until the decision of the party leadership was approved by CDA members. To this end, a party conference was scheduled for 2 October in Arnhem (van Holsteyn 2011, 418)⁴⁵⁰. Numerous prominent CDA members voiced their opposition to the partnership with the PVV in the lead up to the conference. Most importantly, given the Coalition's prospective one seat majority, two CDA parliamentarians—Kathleen Ferrier and Ad Koppejan—remained staunchly opposed to governing with the PVV. One of the reasons Ferrier was opposed was Wilder's rejection of the 0.7% target.

Ferrier believed that upholding international commitments was “part of our identity as Christian Democrats.” The reason this view was especially significant was because Ferrier was the CDA's spokesperson on development issues—a position she'd held since 2002—and had been instrumental in drafting the section on development cooperation in *Freedom and Responsibility*⁴⁵¹ (discussed further in subsection 7.3.2, below). Ferrier believes that the 2010 election “changed the whole political landscape of the Netherlands”, a development she puts down to Wilders. “[W]ith the growing populist movement in the Netherlands, it was becoming more and more difficult to keep this vision on... what our role should be, what our new Dutch identity should be in this fast-changing world,” she told me⁴⁵².

At the Arnhem conference, the CDA found itself backed into a corner. The party's identity was in question, but it was not able to process this on its own terms. Wilders' polarising rhetoric meant that, in terms of political positioning, on policy issues meant that, you were either with him or against him. The CDA membership was now obliged to answer the ‘Wilder's question’ in totality, risking its historical occupation of the ‘pivotal centre’ because of the need to provide a definitive ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to the coalition agreement. In this context, internal views on the imperative to maintain the 0.7% target began to function as a proxy for a member's

government with majority support on major issues in Parliament, or a majority government in which one partner has no cabinet ministers.”

⁴⁴⁹ The unique nature of this settlement meant that, in addition to the coalition agreement, an additional ‘parliamentary support agreement’ was agreed between the PVV and the VVD and CDA. This document detailed the terms of the PVV's ongoing parliamentary support for the minority government.

⁴⁵⁰ The conference generated a huge amount of public and press attention, with more than three times as many CDA members attended the Arnhem conference than the previous conference record (Van Gorp 2012, 311) (Van Gorp 311). For a more detailed account of this conference and its broader political meaning, see Van Gorp (2012, 308–14), from whom my account draws heavily upon.

⁴⁵¹ Ferrier had a strong background as a development practitioner whose previous roles including advising former Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, Jan Pronk.

⁴⁵² Personal interview with Kathleen Ferrier, October 2016.

identification with the ‘pragmatist wing’ of the Party, which favoured partnering with the PVV for sake of participating in Government, and the ‘principles’ wing, which did not.

Ultimately, the pragmatists prevailed, with membership heeding Verhagen’s emotional plea to support the coalition agreement he had negotiated. “We should not let our fear for the PVV guide us,” Verhagen implored delegates prior to the vote “but the power of the CDA” (Verhagen, quoted in Van Gorp 2012, 313). Nonetheless, 32% of the 4000 CDA voters registered their opposition to cooperating with the PVV. Following the vote, Ferrier and Koppejan relented, agreeing to provide their support for the government⁴⁵³. This paved the way for *Freedom and Responsibility*, the VVD-CDA Coalition Agreement, to direct the Government’s policy agenda over the coming years.

Coalition Agreements⁴⁵⁴ are uniquely important within the Dutch political system. They function as “a kind of political contract that holds the coalition together” (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 145)—a public record of the consensus reached by the coalition parties on the policy priorities of the government. Coalition Agreements can function as critical junctures for the trajectory of development policy in the Netherlands and often have significant implications for foreign policy (Kaarbo 2013, chapter 4). At the same time, however, the place of development *in* these negotiations in coalition forming negotiations is always marginal. As Frans Bieckmann explained to me, while Coalition Agreements are “very important” for development policy, development policy is “not important at all” in the negotiations that lead to the Coalition Agreements—a reflection of the low salience of aid amongst powerful political actors who negotiate these agreements⁴⁵⁵. As I continue to trace the gradual disintegration of the hold of the 0.7% consensus in Dutch politics, I now turn my focus to the development section of *Freedom and Responsibility* and to the politician whose responsibility it became to deliver the policy commitments it contained.

7.3.2 Ben Knapen and 0.7%: Implementing Freedom and Responsibility

The Rutte-Verhagen cabinet, installed by Queen Beatrix on 14 October 2010, contained twelve ministers, six apiece from the VVD and the CDA (including Prime Minister Rutte)⁴⁵⁶. A further

⁴⁵³ Ferrier remembers the “debates on Coalition Formation [as being] very tough”. She also remains firm in her conviction that the deal with the PVV was “a historic mistake”. The agreement “meant the end of my truly Christian democratic party”, she told me.

⁴⁵⁴ In Dutch, *Regeerakkoord*.

⁴⁵⁵ Personal interview with Frans Bieckmann, November 2014.

⁴⁵⁶ Although Dutch cabinets are usually quite small, this was “the smallest cabinet for many years” (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 157).

eight state secretaries⁴⁵⁷—junior ministers who did not routinely attend cabinet—were named. One of these was the CDA’s Dr Ben Knapen, who was appointed State Secretary for European Affairs and International Cooperation. Development cooperation has traditionally been a cabinet post in the Netherlands⁴⁵⁸, so many considered this arrangement to be an institutional downgrading of development cooperation reflecting the pressure the Dutch development consensus was under⁴⁵⁹. The appointment of Knapen also surprised the Dutch development sector. Yet while Knapen had not previously held elected office, his appointment was not entirely atypical in the Netherlands, where there is a strong tradition of ministers being appointed “for their expertise in the policy area for which they were to assume responsibility” (Andeweg and Irwin 2014, 158).

Knapen had begun his career as a foreign correspondent, completing posts in Indonesia, the United States and Germany, before becoming the editor-in-chief at *NRC Handelsblad*, a Dutch daily. In the mid-2000s, Knapen worked for a period in the private sector as Senior Director of Corporate Communication, Marketing and Institutional Affairs at Philips. Knapen had also held a chair as Professor of Media Quality and Ethics at Radboud University, Nijmegen⁴⁶⁰. As highlighted earlier (subsection 7.2.2), Knapen was a Council Member of the WRR at the time of becoming State Secretary, and had recently overseen the publication of *Attached to the World*, which proposed a series of reforms for Dutch foreign policy (Knapen et al. 2011). With his appointment as State Secretary, Knapen had an opportunity to enact some of his policy proposals.

Freedom and Responsibility established the policy parameters for aid policy during the Rutte I cabinet by promising three key changes. First, the agreement promised that “development policy will be fundamentally reviewed and modernised,” adding the important qualifier that the WRR’s *Less Pretension, More Ambition* would serve as the guideline for doing so (VVD and CDA 2010, 10). Second, it promised to rationalise the scope of aid activity by reducing the number of countries receiving Dutch development aid and the number of sectors it would operate in. Third, the Coalition Agreement announced that there would be a decrease in the development

⁴⁵⁷ In Dutch, *staatssecretarissen*.

⁴⁵⁸ The ‘Development Minister’ was typically formally appointed as minister without portfolio (Kaarbo 2013, Loc 1576).

⁴⁵⁹ “It was a political message if you downgrade a minister to a state secretary”, Kitty van der Heijden told me, for example (Personal Interview, February 2016). “It’s a very clear message because state secretaries don’t meet in senior cabinet meetings.” Yet alongside this the VVD-CDA Coalition Agreement not only gave responsibility for development cooperation to a state secretary, but also combined made this post responsible for European Affairs—an exceedingly demanding set of responsibilities.

⁴⁶⁰ Most of the details from this biographical sketch are drawn from the profile included in Hemerijck, Knapen, and Doorne (2009, 282).

cooperation budget from 0.8% to 0.7% of GNI over the coming two years⁴⁶¹, a more minor reduction than many development insiders were expecting.

In essence, *Freedom and Responsibility* promised to reform development cooperation and uphold the 0.7% commitment, a position which clearly bore Kathleen Ferrier's imprint⁴⁶². Thanks to Wilders' framing, however, these two objectives had become politically incompatible in the increasingly zero-sum world of Dutch political discourse. The dynamics of the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock meant that an explicit commitment to upholding the 0.7% commitment was now taken to signal a preference for preserving the status quo. Politically speaking, it simply did not matter how ambitious any other simultaneously pursued reform efforts might be. The symbolic misalignment of the coalition agreement was encapsulated in the document's desire to reform development policy according to *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, when the take home message from this report, as I discussed earlier (subsection 7.2.1), was that the elite consensus on the 0.7% target had broken. From the perspective of political symbolism, the internal inconsistency of the development section of *Freedom and Responsibility* demonstrates the direct impact Wilders' framing had on policy choices.

As State Secretary, Knapen's strategy was, he told me, to look "for a middle ground where I could redevelop legitimacy in society for development cooperation"⁴⁶³. Just six weeks after his appointment as Secretary of State, Knapen stood before the *Tweede Kamer* to present his *26 November Letter*⁴⁶⁴—an important initial bureaucratic step in carrying out the commitments in the Coalition Agreement—and spoke of the need "to maintain or restore public support" (MFA 2010b, 1) given how "many Dutch people fear the consequences of globalisation and are sceptical about the usefulness of development cooperation—for their own country and for the world as a whole" (MFA 2010b, 4). Yet Knapen was boxed in by the contradictions inherent in the Coalition Agreement.

Charting a middle ground, was virtually impossible in the prevailing political environment, for four key reasons. First, as the 2010 election results so clearly revealed, the middle ground in

⁴⁶¹ The financial annex to the Coalition Agreement specified that this measure would generate savings of €400 million.

⁴⁶² Ferrier was a firm believer in upholding the 0.7% target but also had a history as a reformer. She agreed with most of the recommendations of *Less Pretension, More Ambition*.

⁴⁶³ This stance is also evident in Knapen's *26 November Letter*, which acknowledges the need "to maintain or restore public support" (MFA 2010b, 1) and concludes by emphasising the imperative to generate "fresh support for international cooperation funded by the taxpayer" (MFA 2010b, 14).

⁴⁶⁴ In the Dutch system, the cabinet is responsible to the States-General. However, as cabinet members cannot be members of the States-General, the presentations of Letters to Parliament is the key means of informing the States-General and its committees of changes in policy.

Dutch politics was rapidly receding. The political space available for rehabilitating the legitimacy for development cooperation was almost non-existent given Wilders' framing of the 0.7% target in such black-and-white terms. This had created an environment where the 0.7% target was 'sacrosanct' (Knapen's words) not only for development supporters, but increasingly for anti-development supporters.

The second reason Knapen was unlikely to successfully chart a middle ground on development relates to his limited political presence. Many I spoke with described how Knapen was "not really a politician". It is a characterisation I suspect Knapen would agree with. "I never had the ambition to go into government," Knapen conceded to me when I asked him to recount how he first heard about his prospective appointment as Secretary of State. "The first time they called me, I never called them back, because I wasn't very interested in doing that job."

Knapen, a journalist and academic, is analytically driven. By background as well as temperament, he was deeply reluctant to engage in the sort of rhetorical gamesmanship required to 'cut-throat' and shake-up the debate. As Korteweg (2013, 765) has observed, Wilders' success is a function of his "capacity to manipulate the press and set the tone of the debate by making the most quotable interventions in such debates". Knapen, on the other hand, had little concern for generating media attention or garnering a political profile. As a reluctant political appointee, Knapen had no electoral base he was obliged to court.

The final reason why Knapen was unlikely to successfully forge a middle ground on aid relates to his lack of personal enthusiasm in the 0.7% target. "I have defended the 0.7%—and I even managed to keep it to that—although I never believed very much in it," Knapen conceded to me. Nonetheless, Knapen saw the value of adhering to the 0.7% target for "reputational reasons and leverage with the outside world" after such a long period of investment. For this reason, Knapen was a consistent public advocate for maintaining 0.7% during his tenure⁴⁶⁵, but his personal reticence towards the target meant his advocacy lacked any real dynamism. He viewed

⁴⁶⁵ At almost every opportunity he got, Knapen reinforced this message. In the 26 November Letter, Knapen reminded Parliamentarians that, "with an ODA budget of 0.7% of GNP, the Netherlands will maintain its position among leading donor countries, and meet its international commitments" (Reference 26 November Letter). The accompanying Press Release on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website also reiterated that "by maintaining its development budget at 0.7% of GNP, the Netherlands will remain a leading donor country and still keep to international agreements" (MFA 2010a). During a speech in The Hague on 2 December 2010, Knapen essentially repeated the line from the 26 November Letter; "[a]n aid budget of 0.7 GNP keeps my country among the international front runners and enables me to invest in my priorities." Early in the New Year, in a speech to an audience which included Princess Maxima, Knapen again highlighted that "with an aid budget of 0.7% of GNP, the Netherlands remains a leader in international cooperation." In a speech in Amsterdam on 31 March, Knapen again repeated this refrain verbatim (Knapen 2011a). On 6 April, in The Hague, Knapen did so again, adding that "[maintaining] 0.7% keeps us in the realm of being a reliable partner as that is the international norm" (Knapen 2011b).

the target as an “old fashioned concept” and was eager to see it revised and rethought “within an international framework of change”. “I never was very much excited by the 0.7%,” Knapen told me. Rather, he was excited about “development policy coherence in a globalized world”⁴⁶⁶.

For each of the four reasons list above, Knapen was unable to fundamentally recast the overarching politic dynamics of Dutch aid policy. The relentless downward pressure on the 0.7% consensus exerted by the ‘elite hobby’ aid salience shock continued uninterrupted. Yet despite this, Knapen did succeed in bringing greater focus to Dutch development policy, a goal he had voiced in his project with the WRR (Knapen et al. 2011). Knapen’s *Letter to the House of Representatives presenting the spearheads of development cooperation policy*, presented on 18 March 2011, formalised a reduction of partner countries from 33 to 15 and a reduction of priority themes from 11 to four ‘spearhead’ sectors: security and the legal order; food security; water; and sexual and reproductive health and rights (MFA 2011, 2).

In retrospect, Knapen’s tenure is emblematic of the CDAs travails during the period. With his conflicted private and public views on the 0.7%, Knapen was stuck in the very same bind as the party he represented. Like Knapen, the CDA sought to chart a centrist course, but the political ground was shifting beneath them. In attempting to chart a nuanced position between ‘old’ and ‘new’ approaches to development cooperation, the CDA’s stance on aid, rather than appearing sensible, appeared vacillating in the turbulent Dutch political environment. The reason it did so was because Wilder’s framing of the 0.7% target had polarised the debate, reducing the operative political question to an inescapable binary: do you support 0.7% or not? As we will see in the next subsection, the split in the CDA over this question was directly exploited by Wilders, ultimately leading to the downfall of the Rutte I government.

7.3.3 Wilders, 0.7% and the Collapse of the Rutte I

The Netherlands plunged into a fresh political crisis in the spring of 2012. Amidst a broader European debt and deficit crisis, forecasts released by the Bureau for Economic Analysis (CBR), projected the Netherlands budget deficit would balloon to 4.6% on the back of slower than expected economic growth (Steinglass 2012b; Geitner 2007; Traynor 2012). This deficit projection exceeded the Europeans Union’s 3% mandate and required the coalition partners to

⁴⁶⁶ Knapen’s reticence around 0.7% was something that close observers noticed during his relatively short tenure. It frustrated the development constituency, who felt that Knapen was not only more interested in the European Affairs component of his portfolio, but also paid more attention to it.

find €9 billion in savings before April 30 (Cluskey 2012a). As the Netherlands was instrumental in drafting the EU rules, it risked embarrassment if it did not adhere to them. Furthermore, having been a vocal critique of non-adherents during the prolonged European debt and deficit crisis, the Netherlands found itself “in a fix”, in the words of political scientist Paul Niewenburg. “Having such a big mouth on Greece and seizing the moral high ground, [Dutch political leaders] are now morally obliged to stick to the rules” (Niewenburg quoted in Traynor 2012). The bottom line, politically, was that “without a new round of austerity, the Dutch would still be above the eurozone deficit limit by 2015” (Traynor 2012). The Netherlands’ triple-A credit rating was also at risk if savings could not be found (Steinglass 2012a).

Rutte responded by gathering his coalition parties together for a three-week summit, beginning on 5 March 2012. The summit became known as the ‘*Catshuis* negotiations’, after the name of the Prime Minister’s official residence, where the talks took place. During these negotiations, the aid budget was the PVV’s key target for generating savings, despite Knapen’s earlier vows to “hold the line at 0.7 percent” (Steinglass 2012b). Matt Steinglass (2012a), reporting on the talks for *The Financial Times*, observed that “the only area in which Mr Wilders has shown an appetite for cuts is the foreign aid budget, whose size... was long a source of national pride. But cuts to foreign aid are opposed by the other coalition partner, the Christian Democrats [CDA]”.

The prospect of Dutch abandonment of the 0.7% target prompted the intervention of two global figures, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Microsoft founder and philanthropist Bill Gates. Both men publicly urged the Netherlands to maintain their longstanding commitment to the 0.7% target (Cluskey 2012b; DutchNews 2012a). Gates had earlier contacted Ferrier, who had advised him to appear on television and argue that the Netherlands was “losing its identity”⁴⁶⁷. Gates was also interviewed by *De Volkskrant* (DutchNews 2012a).

On Thursday 29 March, in closed talks, the leadership of the VVD, CDA and PVV agreed to cut the aid budget by €1 billion (down from €4.6 billion) (Cluskey 2012a). These details were leaked and the following day two daily newspapers—*De Volkskrant* and *De Telegraaf*—reported that cuts to aid were imminent (DutchNews 2012a). By the afternoon of 30 March, the political stakes were raised further when six influential members of the CDA, including former Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers along with three former foreign ministers and two former aid ministers, sent Rutte a letter urging him to personally intervene to maintain aid levels at 0.7% of GNI (DutchNews 2012a; Cluskey 2012a).

⁴⁶⁷ Personal interview with Kathleen Ferrier, October 2016.

This letter publicly reopened the fissures within the CDA that had been so evident at the time of the coalition formation. Two of the CDA politicians who had been most critical of the party's proposed cooperation with Wilders' PVV—Kathleen Ferrier and Ad Koppejan—both voiced immediately voiced their public support for the sentiments expressed in the letter (Cluskey 2012a)⁴⁶⁸. The 0.7% target once again acted as the fulcrum for intraparty conflict, driving a wedge between the 'principles' focused left wing and then more pragmatic right wing, led by Verhagen⁴⁶⁹. Overall, senior CDA figures were more concerned about aid effectiveness than aid quantity, but this priority was much more difficult to communicate effectively. Knapen laments that a commitment to 0.7% became a "litmus test" within the CDA, particularly because he "didn't care too much about 0.7%". Nonetheless, the letter achieved its intended purpose in the short-run, forcing those conducting the *Catshuis* negotiations to search elsewhere for savings.

Then, suddenly, on Saturday 21 April, after the *Catshuis* negotiations had dragged on for seven weeks, "Wilders surprised both his friends and enemies with the news that he could not accept the budget agreement" (van Holsteyn 2014). Two days later, on Monday 23, Rutte visited Queen Beatrix to hand in his government's resignation (The Economist 2012a)⁴⁷⁰. Ostensibly, therefore, the Rutte I fell over a disagreement over the 0.7% target. In reality, of course, the failure of the *Catshuis* negotiations reflected more fundamental divisions about the direction of the country. The 0.7% target had become a proxy for debates around austerity, the influence of the European Union, Dutch identity and the internationalist orientation of the Dutch elite. As Tom van der Lee, a representative of Dutch civil society organisation Oxfam NOVIB, shrewdly observed at the time, "Development assistance used to be something that united people across party lines in the Netherlands. Now it's being used to exploit political polarisation" (van der Lee, quote in Giles 2012).

⁴⁶⁸ In her interview with me, Ferrier acknowledged playing a leading role in organising the drafting and publication of this letter. She was also being briefed on the progress of the *Catshuis* negotiations.

⁴⁶⁹ "The prospect of cutting aid has split Mr Knapen's party, the Christian Democrats", reported Chris Giles (Giles 2012), in an article for the *Financial Times*.

⁴⁷⁰ Rutte—now acting in a caretaker capacity—along with finance minister Jan Kees de Jager redoubled their efforts to find a solution to the budget crisis ahead of the 30 April deadline. Now unencumbered by Wilders and his PVV, the pair found that other parties were suddenly more willing to negotiate. One minister was quoted by *The Economist* as feeling relieved because "[p]eople no longer assume we are working in the shadow of Wilders" (The Economist 2012b). Remarkably, an emergency budget package was agreed "with astonishing speed" (Jolly 2012). On 26 April 2012, five parties—the VVD, CDA, D66, GL and the CU—reached an agreement to pass a 2013 austerity budget. Tellingly, the development cooperation budget—the focal point of austerity previous negotiations to this point—was not affected. For a second time, an agreement orchestrated by CDA Minister of Finance Jan Kees de Jager had managed to spare the development cooperation budget, despite seemingly high odds against this outcome. The removal of the PVV from the negotiating table rapidly changed the dynamics around the development cooperation budget. Nonetheless, as we will see, the signatories to this document were not particularly wedded to it during the upcoming election campaign (van Kessel and Hollander 2012, 2, 7-8).

The fact that Wilders' chose to stake his involvement in the negotiations on the maintenance of the 0.7% target says a great deal about the symbolic value it had acquired in Dutch politics. At the same time, it also speaks to the declining importance of aid that the major parties had become so willing to play politics with aid. By now, the political reality was that cutting aid represented one of the most politically expedient steps to reduce the budget deficit. There had been a "sharp drop in public support for foreign aid" (Giles 2012), and polling showed that cuts to aid "evoked less opposition than most other potential cuts, such as in unemployment payments" (Giles 2012)

Politically, these developments hurt the CDA most of all. The CDA's ownership of the 0.7% target had been publicly reinforced by the pro-0.7% *Catshuis* letter. But, as the previous three subsections have illustrated, the 0.7% target sparked deep divisions within the CDA itself, revealing a party that was fundamentally divided on how to navigate the terrain of contemporary Dutch politics. This inability to project a coherent identity would continue to have political ramifications for the CDA in the upcoming 2012 parliamentary elections, where the ongoing influence of the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock would reach its ultimate conclusion.

§§§

7.4 The Development Consensus Disintegrates: Abandoning 0.7%

[W]e had to break this 0.7% to get a debate on what's really important.

—Ingrid de Caluwé, 2014⁴⁷¹

Public discourse around development spending has changed radically in recent years.

—Fic, Kennan, and te Velde, 2014

The failed *Catshuis* negotiations provided a vivid reminder of how fragmented and unstable Dutch politics had become. When Prime Minister Rutte visited Queen Beatrix to hand her his

⁴⁷¹ Personal interview with Ingrid de Caluwé, November 2014.

government's resignation on Monday 23 April 2012, it marked the fifth time in succession that a Cabinet was unable to see out its term. The *Catshuis* negotiations also revealed just how uncertain and unstable the politics around the 0.7% target had become.

The section below concludes my account of aid policy change in the Netherlands by documenting the ultimate result of the path dependency initiated and sustained by Wilders' persistent framing of the 0.7% target. The persistent downward force on aid spending supplied by the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock eventually led to a rupture of the Dutch development consensus during coalition negotiations following the 2012 parliamentary elections. As we will see, however, this rupture created the space for the beginnings of a new consensus to emerge.

7.4.1 *All or Nothing: Development Cooperation in the 2012 Dutch Election*

The budget crisis that had triggered the *Catshuis* negotiations remained the key issue on the Dutch political agenda through the 2012 election campaign (van Holsteyn 2014)⁴⁷². The titles chosen by the traditional parties for their manifestos are instructive in encapsulating their pitch to voters around how they would approach dealing with the budget deficit (van Holsteyn 2014, 323). The VVD emphasised their commitment to meeting the EU's 3% target by choosing 'Don't postpone, But Take Action'⁴⁷³. The PvdA selected 'The Netherlands stronger and fairer', to highlight their belief that budget cuts should be implemented in a way which doesn't not exacerbate inequality (van Holsteyn 2014, 323)⁴⁷⁴. The CDA's manifesto was titled 'Everybody'⁴⁷⁵, a title that conveyed, albeit unintentionally, the party's overriding political problem—an inability to identify a core constituency as forces operating at both fringes of the political spectrum tore apart the 'pivotal centre' (Krouwel 2012). As van Kessel and Holland (2012, 10) would later conclude, the new CDA leader, Sybrand van Haersma Buma, "was unable to clarify what truly distinguished his party from the rest..." during the 2012 campaign. This same problem, as we will see, would also plague the CDA's development policy.

⁴⁷² For detailed reviews of the 2012 Dutch Parliamentary election, see and Voerman (2013), van Kessel and Hollander (2012) and Van Holsteyn (2014). This section draws on information from a number of election manifestos from the 2012 campaign. These manifestos were all sourced from the Manifesto Project Data Dashboard (*The Manifesto Project Data Collection* (version 2016-6) 2016).

⁴⁷³ Accordingly, the VVD's manifesto was the most aggressive in reducing the deficit. According to the CBP's election modelling, the VVD's policies would reduce the budget deficit by €16 billion by 2017, the most of all the parties (CPB and PBL 2012, 7).

⁴⁷⁴ During the campaign, financial spokesperson Ronald Plasterk underlined the PvdA's core message when quote as saying "[the PvdA] think it's unwise to take drastic measures just to meet the 2013 target [of a budget deficit of below 3%]" (Plasterk quoted in Mock and Tartwijk 2012). While the PvdA's policies were projected to reduce the budget deficit by 2017 by almost of much as the VVD (€15 billion), under their plan the deficit would not begin to reduce until 2014 (CPB and PBL 2012, 6).

⁴⁷⁵ *Ledereen* in Dutch.

The PPV's manifesto was titled 'Their Brussels, our Netherlands'⁴⁷⁶ and advanced policies that would see the Netherlands leave the EU and abandon the Euro⁴⁷⁷. Wilders' strategy in 2012 was to use extreme positioning on Europe in the way same way he had used extreme positioning on Islam to such great political effect in 2010, building on his repudiation of the 3% target during the *Catshuis* negotiations. Wilders' had explained his departure from the *Catshuis* negotiations as rejecting diktats from Brussels, a refrain he regularly repeated during the campaign (The Economist 2012b).

Most relevant to our discussion here, however, is the way in which the PVV's policy on development cooperation had been boiled down to a single word: *niet* (none). Wilders' was clearly intent on framing the aid debate by using extreme positioning. Yet the real power of the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock is demonstrated in the way in which Wilders' extreme positioning led other parties to respond. This is best illustrated by recounting the decisive moment for development policy in the 2012 campaign.

On Saturday 16 June (DutchNews 2012b), two VVD politicians—Parliamentary Group Leader Stef Blok and spokesperson for development cooperation Ingrid de Caluwé—published a provocative opinion column in *de Volkskrant* in which they called for a €3 billion cut in the development cooperation budget. This represented a much more hard-line stance on the development budget than the VVD had proposed in 2010, when it called for development assistance to be halved. Blok and de Caluwé's argued that in many instances development aid was a 'drastic flop' and questioned the relevance of the 0.7% target to the Netherlands given only four other countries adhered to it (DutchNews 2012b).

This column signalled just how far Dutch cultural and political conventions around 0.7% had moved in such a brief period. For the three traditional parties, questioning the 0.7% target had been taboo until the 2010 election⁴⁷⁸. Now, just one electoral cycle later, aggressively opposing 0.7% was seen as an electoral advantageous political strategy for a mainstream party. And this provocation was not supplied by a relatively fringe figure like Arend Jan Bokestijn. Rather, the column was published in a centrist national newspaper and contributed by a leading VVD politician, alongside the party's spokesperson on development cooperation.

⁴⁷⁶ *Hún Brussel, óns Nederland* in Dutch.

⁴⁷⁷ Page 16 of the 2012 PVV Manifesto featured a full-page photo of a crumpled European flag in a waste-bin.

⁴⁷⁸ Specifically, political parties had not questioned the 0.7% target in their election manifestos prior to 2010, when the VVD advocated halving the development cooperation budget.

What accounts for this rapid shift? The preceding three sections of this chapter have answered this question by demonstrating the corrosive influence of the 'elite hobby' aid salience shock on the 0.7% consensus. What I want to focus on here is showing that, by this stage of the salience shocks' evolution, its key role was in coarsening the development debate. As Fic, Kennan and te Velde (2014, 1) state, "[p]ublic discourse around development spending has changed radically in recent years." By the 2012 election, Wilder's framing contributed to a situation where the politics of development was an 'all or nothing' proposition, hinging on ascent or otherwise to the 0.7% target. Not only had Wilders' infused the 0.7% target with a new symbolism, his ongoing interventions had changed the calculus for successful political discourse. To impact the debate decisively now required advancing an almost outrageous proposal, especially when dealing with a low **issue salience** like aid. To demonstrate they were 'listening' on development cooperation and to prove they were serious about pursuing reform, the VVD was obliged to 'make a statement'.

Ingrid de Caluwé admitted as much to me when I asked her if the intention of the column was to shake up the debate⁴⁷⁹. "Of course" she replied, acknowledging that "we chose a radical approach and that's what you do as a politician. Because if you really want to [have] the debate, you have to come along with a very strong position." Blok and de Caluwé knew that they would "never get to the €1.4b [their proposed budget cap for development spending]" but instead aimed to "[bring] about a debate". For de Caluwé, development cooperation, as it was traditionally pursued by the Netherlands, "didn't really make a difference". She felt that the idea that "other countries will follow" if the Netherlands leads the way on 0.7% had also been proven to be false.

For de Caluwé, the sense of obligation attached to the 0.7% target needed to be dismantled if the Netherlands was going to embrace a new, collaborative, trade-orientated approach to development cooperation. "It was a taboo [topic]", she explained. "[We were] talking about 0.7% because we had to provide this money because they are poor and we are rich and we should provide the money"⁴⁸⁰. In an admission that tells of the symbolic hold the 0.7% target had acquired in signifying the 'old order', de Caluwé explained that she believed "we had to break this 0.7% to get a debate on what's really important"⁴⁸¹.

⁴⁷⁹ Personal interview with Ingrid de Caluwé, November 2014.

⁴⁸⁰ This comment recalls Mark Rutte's comment, in light of Arend Jan Bokestijn's questioning of Dutch development cooperation spending in 2008, that "we're buying off a guilty conscience and it has to stop" (van Os 2008).

⁴⁸¹ This is not an isolated view, as Spitz, Muskens and van Ewijk (2013, 13) have documented. "To the frustration of many experts," they acknowledge, "the focus on the 0.7% target hinders a fundamental debate on the international role of the Netherlands and the need for policy coherence."

In contrast to the VVD, the PvdA chose to go ‘all in’ on development, demonstrating their commitment by promising to increase development spending beyond 0.7% to 0.8%. The CDA, however, found itself wedged again. The internal fissures around the 0.7% target that were exposed by the ill-fated collaboration with the PVV had not been resolved and so the CDA proved incapable of matching the bold and decisive politics on 0.7% embraced by the VVD or the PvdA. Worse, the CDA’s hesitation in committing to 0.7% target during the election campaign reinforced a view that the CDA was unsure of how to approach the present political moment.

The draft version of the CDA’s election manifesto did not include a commitment to adhere to the 0.7% standard. However, in a sign of the disconnect between the CDA leadership and the party’s grassroots, this commitment “was re-included by popular vote at the CDA congress at the end of June” (DutchNews 2012c) and ultimately taken to the election⁴⁸². In effect, this episode amounts to a replay of what happened during the *Cathuis* negotiations, when the fact adhering to the 0.7% target was contested within the party spilled into the public sphere. In Kathleen Ferrier’s view, “losing our identity when it comes to development cooperation means the [CDA] is perceived by large groups in the Netherlands as a party that has no longer its own identity”⁴⁸³. The feeling that the CDA was lacking a sense direction was reflected in the results of the 2012 elections, where the party fared even worse than it had in 2010, setting another historical low in its vote total.

7.4.2 Moving On: Development in the 2012 Coalition Agreement

The nature of the 2012 election results ensured the 2012 cabinet formation process proceeded much more rapidly than it had in 2010 (Otjes and Voerman 2013, 168)⁴⁸⁴. The VVD secured 41 seats, an increase of 10 from 2010. The PvdA, meanwhile, won 38 seats, an increase of 8. As these parties together controlled 79 seats of the 150 seat *Tweede Kamer*, a ‘purple coalition’ was widely accepted to be the most likely outcome of the election (Otjes and Voerman 2013, 168). Wilders’ extreme positioning on Europe was not as politically effective his anti-Islam-

⁴⁸² As part of the CPB’s assessment of election manifestos for the 10 major parties contesting the 2012 election, the budgetary impact of their respective plans on development cooperation were compared (CPB and PBL 2012, 9). According to the CPB’s analysis, the VVD’s proposed cuts to the development budget would contribute to a €2.75 billion reduction in public spending by 2017, compared to the CBP baseline. The PVV and the far right DPK were the only parties to advocate deeper cuts to the development budget, shaving €3.5 and €3.25 billion, respectively, from public spending by 2017 via their proposals. The CBP projected that the CDA’s plan would result in a small €0.5b reduction in public spending, in relation to the CBP baseline, by 2017. The PvdA and D66 plans were shown by the CBP to have no effect on the baseline. The proposals of the SP, GroenLinks and the ChristenUnie (CU) all raised expenditure on development.

⁴⁸³ Personal interview with Kathleen Ferrier, October 2016.

⁴⁸⁴ The 2012 formation was the shortest since 1971 (Otjes and Voerman 2013, 168). It took 50 days.

orientated campaign in 2010, as the PVV lost more than 5% of its vote share and dropped 9 seats (Otjes and Voerman 2013, 167)⁴⁸⁵. Nonetheless, the PVV remained the third largest party in the *Tweede Kamer*. Securing just 8.5% of the vote, the CDA was relegated to being only the 5th largest party in parliament, behind the Socialist Party.

On 29 October, a Coalition Agreement titled *Building Bridges* consummated the new partnership between the VVD and PvdA (VVD and PvdA 2012). As its name suggests, the document was conciliatory in tone, projecting stability in the light of the ongoing budget crisis. Whereas coalition agreements had previously been developed by working through policy issues one at a time, reaching a compromise on each, the 2012 negotiations were approached differently (Otjes and Voerman 2013, 168). In what amounted to a new ‘political experiment’⁴⁸⁶, “no attempt was made to reach political or substantive compromises, but instead agreements were reached concerning exchanges” (van Holsteyn 2014, 325). In effect, the coalition partners “divided the major political issues between them and allowed one party to outline policy on ‘their’ issues” (Otjes and Voerman 2013, 168).

That the parties resorted to this approach reflects says a great deal about the breakdown of Dutch consociational democracy and the influence of Wilders. In this more fragmented, volatile and contested Dutch political landscape, the imperative for both the VVD and the PvdA to each retain an independent identity trumped the historical imperative to negotiate a compromise on *each* issue⁴⁸⁷. Prominent Dutch political scientist Andre Krouwel explained the underlying political logic of the new approach in a post-election column. “The coalition’s two constituent members,” Krouwel argued, “need to maintain their appeal to voters that proved very willing to support the more radical options of Wilders’ PVV and [Emile] Roemer’s [left-wing Socialist Party].” Another factor explaining the new negotiating approach relates to the political capital acquired by Mark Rutte and Diederik Samson (the leader of the PvdA) by their performances in the campaign—political capital that afforded them the requisite authority to pursue a new way of negotiating the coalition agreement⁴⁸⁸.

⁴⁸⁵ A common explanation for the PVV’s poor performance relates to Wilders’ role in the collapse of the *Catshuis* negotiations. Rather than burnishing his credentials as a Euro-sceptic, Wilders’ surprise exit from the negotiations sealed the PVV’s reputation as an unreliable partner.

⁴⁸⁶ This was the phrase used by the national daily *NRC Handelsblad* on October 30, 2012, the day after the Coalition Agreement was finalised (van Holsteyn 2014, 325).

⁴⁸⁷ Van Holsteyn (2014, 325) argued that this method of developing the Coalition Agreement meant that “each partner could point to success in obtaining ideas that were important to it and could thereby better maintain its own identity.”

⁴⁸⁸ Diederik Samson’s performance triggered a remarkably rapid turnaround in the polls for the PvdA during the 2012 campaign. Opinion Polls taken on 22 August suggested the PvdA was in line for between 17 and 21 seats, with the Socialist Party expecting between 33 to 37 (van Holsteyn 2014, 324). Less than a month later, on 11 September, the eve of the elections, polling shows these positions had effectively been reversed. From late August the gains of the PvdA proceeded at almost a seat a day (Krouwel 2012). Samson’s personal appeal was a key driver of these

The new negotiating approach had direct implications for Dutch development policy. The VVD chose development cooperation as one of ‘their’ issues and shaped the policy agenda accordingly, presenting “some striking reforms” (Wijffels et al. 2012, 3). First, *Building Bridges* announced significant additional cuts to the development cooperation budget (VVD and PvdA 2012, 20)⁴⁸⁹. These cuts were framed as a contribution towards solving the Netherlands’ overall financial problems (VVD and PvdA 2012, 20). The Agreement itself did not explicitly mention 0.7%, but the scale of the cuts made it clear the Netherlands would abandon the target in 2013. A second noteworthy reform was the creation of a ‘revolving’ fund (later named the Dutch Good Growth Fund) to “be used to support investments in developing countries, especially by small and medium-sized enterprises” (VVD and PvdA 2012, 20). This policy initiative reinforced the message that signalled that the policy shift from ‘aid to investment’ begun under Knapen would not only continue, but deepen. A third key reform of *Building Bridges* involved creating the new post of Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, “thus confirming the importance of cohesion between these two policy areas” (VVD and PvdA 2012, 20).

In a development that took many observers by surprise, Lilianne Ploumen was appointed as Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation. In contrast to her predecessor Ben Knapen, Ploumen’s political credentials were not in question, as she had just completed a five-year term as chair of the PvdA. Rather, the surprise generated by Ploumen’s appointment stemmed from the disjuncture between her longstanding position as a development cooperation insider and advocate, and her sudden willingness to preside over the abandonment of the 0.7% target. Ploumen had a substantial background in various roles in the development and not-for-profit sector. Between 2001 and 2007, prior to becoming party chair, Ploumen had worked for Cordaid, a large Catholic, Dutch-based international development organisation. And in one of her last acts as party chair, Ploumen presided over the 2012 PvdA party congress which resolved to increase development spending to 0.8% of GNI⁴⁹⁰.

remarkable gains (Krouwel 2012). Alongside his strong debate performances, Samson ran an unusually personal campaign by the standards of Dutch politics, “allowing the public to catch a glimpse of his private life” (Mock and Tartwijk 2012; see also Diehl 2012).

⁴⁸⁹The financial annex to *Building Bridges*, specified savings of €750m to the ODA budget, in 2014, 2015 and 2016 before rising to €1b in 2017, generating of total of €3250 in savings compared to the draft budget in 2013. For a more detailed overview of these figures, see *A World to Gain* (MFA 2013, 60).

⁴⁹⁰The PvdA’s resolution on social democratic international policy, adopted by the PvdA congress on 22 January 2012, stated that, “[t]he PvdA believes that the Dutch contribution to development aid should be at least 0.8% of gross domestic product (GDP).” (PvdA (Labour Party) 2012). It is noteworthy that Jan Pronk, Frans Timmermans (appointed Foreign Minister in Cabinet Rutte II) and Bert Koenders (Minister for Development in Balkenende IV and Timmermans replacement as Minister for Foreign Affairs in Cabinet Rutte II) were members of a commission chaired by Nico Schrijver to draft a resolution on Dutch foreign policy for the congress.

The reactions to Ploumen's decision to accept a Ministerial role overseeing the abandonment of 0.7% were mixed. The Dutch NGO community took particular umbrage at the decision. The PvdA's willingness to accept the abandonment the 0.7% target was also the key reason Jan Pronk—a long serving Minister who held the Development portfolio on three separate occasions—highlighted for resigning his party membership after 49 years⁴⁹¹. In some quarters, however, the PvdA was praised for its pragmatism. Reporting on the Coalition Agreement, DutchNews (2012d) argued that “Labour's decision to abandon the international standard of 0.7% of GDP shows a new realism within the party.”

In any case, as I have outlined, the new mode of negotiating the coalition agreement meant that the VVD controlled the aid policy agenda (although there remains contention as to whose idea the DGGF was)⁴⁹². In the Dutch system, Ministers are obliged to accept the terms of the coalition agreement and implement the agreed agenda. If the Coalition Agreement negotiations had proceeded in the traditional manner, a compromise may have been reached whereby 0.7% was retained at the behest of the PvdA, perhaps for a limited time while a new definition of ODA was worked out⁴⁹³. But as it was, the VVD was determined to abandon 0.7%, not only because it was a promise in its manifesto but also because of the symbolic political benefits of doing so.

Ploumen was an ally of Samson and, like him, a pragmatist. My sense is that she decided to make the best of the opportunity she was presented. While I have no definitive proof for this claim, I strongly suspect Ploumen was relieved that 0.7% had been taken off the table as an issue—by her political opponents no less. Ploumen had reformist instincts and was now freed up to redefine future Dutch development cooperation policy in her image, at least within the confines of the Coalition Agreement. The way she approached this redefining process is the subject I address next.

7.4.3 Towards A New Consensus? Ploumen and 'A World to Gain'

Preparation towards what would become the definitive declaratory policy of the Rutte II government, *A World to Gain: A New Agenda for Aid, Trade and Investment* began in earnest in mid-January 2013. Given the Coalition Agreement was signed on 29 October 2012, and Cabinet officially installed by Queen Beatrix on 5 November, this was the earliest feasible time to

⁴⁹¹ Pronk accounted this decision via personal website on 28 May 2013.

⁴⁹² I received conflicting reports from interviewees about whose idea the DGGF was. Both VVD and PvdA representatives appear to believe it was their own idea.

⁴⁹³ *Building Bridges* included a commitment that the Netherlands would “press in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development for modernising the criteria for Official Development Aid (ODA)” (VVD and PvdA 2012, 20).

commence, given the priority during Ploumen's early months was to prepare for the budget debate.

The drafting of *A World to Gain* was completed in a very short time frame, at the behest of Ploumen. She wanted the policy to be reading by early April, which necessitated completing the document by early March in order to allow adequate time to consult with relevant parties and circulate the document within cabinet. The report was developed by a small three-person drafting team, led by lead writer Selwyn Moons, who had joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from the Ministry of Economic Affairs, as part of the machinery of government changes that accompanied the transfer of trade portfolio functions from the Minister of Economic Affairs to the new Minister of Trade and Development Cooperation⁴⁹⁴. The choice of Moons to head up the writing team was seen by some as a signal of the 'new order'. Moons was aware of these dynamics, acknowledging that coming from the 'trade side' "already made me suspicious" and conceding that "there was some hostility there". But he also felt that believing in the message of the new policy helped him write it more convincingly. "I also believe myself, which helps, of course, if you have to write these particular documents, that this [combining aid and trade] can be a very fruitful and beneficial combination if you use it wisely"⁴⁹⁵.

To meet the tight deadline, the writing team settled into a semi-regular rhythm during the most intense three weeks of drafting during late January and early February 2013. Moons would work on the document from 9am to noon most days, leaving the afternoon to attend primarily to his regular departmental work. After lunch, he would provide the latest draft of the document to Ploumen's chauffeur, who would deliver it to the Minister. Ploumen would digest the material early the next morning, reporting back to the drafting team in a short meeting to commence the day, usually working off a marked-up copy of the latest draft. The cycle would then begin again, with Moons and the team revising, updating and adding to the working draft according to Ploumen's feedback, or that obtained from various other consultation activities that were conducted during the course of developing the policy.

The process of development *A World to Gain* is notable for the close involvement of Ploumen, who was eager to recast thinking about Dutch development cooperation. According to Moons, "Ploumen really believes that you need a new tone and attitude..." to revitalise thinking about Dutch development cooperation. "We were aware of the importance of the narrative", Moons

⁴⁹⁴ A speech writer augmented the drafting team over the last two weeks, to assist with fine-tuning the writing. Internally, Moons reported to two Directors-General during the development of the document.

⁴⁹⁵ Personal interview with Dr Selwyn Moons, October 2014.

told me. Ploumen's key idea was to reconceptualise Dutch international engagement in terms of tiered bilateral relationships⁴⁹⁶. *A World to Gain* argued that the Netherlands engaged with other states in one of three ways: via aid relationships; transitional relationships; or trade relationships. The core idea of Ploumen's policy, then, was that it is in the interests of the both Netherlands *and* its partners to move towards developing trade relationships over time. This conceptualisation provided a driving rationale for the merging of Trade and Development functions within Ploumen's new portfolio.

Ploumen recognised the early part of her tenure as a critical window of opportunity to reorient the narrative around Dutch development policy. In this respect, the abandonment of 0.7% very likely helped Ploumen's cause, rather than hindered it. As we have seen, 0.7% had come to be seen as a symbol of preserving the status quo. The removal of 0.7% freed Ploumen to reform development policy in a way that wasn't available to Ben Knapen, whose positions on reform were, in fact, remarkably similar. Discarding 0.7% was like removing a handbrake on the reform process that Knapen had started, allowing Ploumen to accelerate in a new direction unhindered. As the recent OECD DAC (2017, 11) review of the Netherlands development program acknowledged, *A World to Gain* "cements a significant policy reorientation that was started in 2010." Notably, Knapen's spearheads were left untouched, with no consideration given to modifying them.

Ploumen consistently and persuasively made the case for reforming development before, during and after the launch of *A World to Gain*. In March 2013, a month prior to the publication of *A World to Gain*, Ploumen delivered her first key speech on development. It is instructive that she chose to do so before an audience of 160 'development insiders' in The Hague. To this core constituency, Ploumen mounted a challenging argument for 'moving with the times'⁴⁹⁷. "Old-school development cooperation" was "rather marginal in today's world", which is something that "some people find... difficult to get used to..." Ploumen said. She then cast her planned reforms as part of a natural and inevitable policy evolution which represented an opportunity, once again, for Dutch leadership in development:

First, we had development aid. Then development cooperation took over. Now we are heading for international cooperation—including aid, trade and investment. I truly hope that we can lead the way. And truly cooperate. (Ploumen 2013a).

⁴⁹⁶ Moons acknowledged to me that it was Ploumen who argued that "we should think in terms of relationships..." identifying that there are countries with "which we have an aid relationship and those with which we have a trade relation[ship] and there is something in between."

⁴⁹⁷ The speech was delivered at the annual conference of the Netherlands Society for International Development Conference, the theme of which was 'The Future of International Cooperation' (de Groot and van der Graaf 2014, 10).

After the release of *A World to Gain* on 5 April, Ploumen increased her public appearances, repeatedly making the case for why Dutch development policy needed to change. Her speeches riffed, again and again, on the themes of private sector involvement in development, innovation, investment and policy coherence. On 11 April, Ploumen explained how the Netherlands needed to “adapt” to the changed development landscape with “a new approach, with new tools, new partnerships, new ways of stimulating funding and driving development” (Ploumen 2013b). “The Netherlands”, she added, “is putting the transition from aid to investment into practice.” At the In making this argument, Ploumen was notably conscious of addressing the critique that trade would overshadow development—a key concern within the development sector⁴⁹⁸.

Later, in July 2013, in response to being asked to explain the rationale behind the policy shift represented by *A World to Gain*, Ploumen responded by drawing attention to international factors, saying: “[t]hings have changed. We are facing a world of new global power relationships, different poverty patterns and increased international interdependence” (*Connect* 2013, 9). Ploumen believed that Netherlands was obliged to adapt if it wanted to remain a forerunner in development cooperation.

As my research did not extend beyond the 2013 timeframe, I am not able authoritatively comment on the extent to which Ploumen’s “new agenda for aid, trade and investment” (Ploumen 2013c) has fundamentally transformed the narrative around development cooperation. I have little doubt, however, that Ploumen’s task would have been much more difficult if she had been politically obliged to continue fighting the 0.7% battle. The political pressure eased once 0.7%, the driving symbolic force of the ‘elite hobby’ aid salience shock, was removed from the political agenda.

That said, it is clear the 0.7% target retains a powerful hold in the Netherlands. Very recently, the presence of the Christian Union in the coalition that emerged following the 2017 Dutch parliamentary elections, has helped ensure that the present Coalition Agreement again assents to the 0.7% target, although in a very roundabout way. It promises that, by 2021, development cooperation “budget will once more amount to 0.7% of GNI, minus €1.4 billion” (VVD et al. 2017,

⁴⁹⁸ “So rest assured,” Ploumen (2013a) told delegates at the Society for International Development Conference in March 2013, “trade will not overshadow development cooperation”. In a longer article published in November 2013, Ploumen tackled this criticism again. First, she acknowledge that *A World to Gain*, “describes a unified agenda that bridges the traditional divide between aid and trade.” Ploumen acknowledged that bringing together “two worlds that have long been separate... may cause friction...” Nonetheless, she argued that “there is much to be gained by seeking common ground and combining agendas that benefit both the poor in development countries and stimulate business for Dutch companies” (Ploumen 2013d).

53). (The reference to €1.4 billion refers to cuts agreed by the previous government). Time will tell whether the desire to adhere to 0.7% in this instance will help or hinder the cause of development proponents.

§§§

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has tracked how the ‘elite hobby’ aid salience shock explains aid policy change in the Netherlands. The story of aid policy change told in this chapter differs from the previous chapters in that change occurred over a longer period of time and without the influence of a direct aid salience shock. Instead, Wilders was the progenitor of a classic indirect aid salience shock. He saw an opportunity to politicise aid policy in order to position himself and his party in a politically beneficial way. What this chapter shows is the especially contingent nature of indirect aid salience shocks. Precisely because these changes in aid policy change are achieved through an individual’s ability and opportunity to effectively frame the agenda, rather than through direct international in the aid policy decisionmaking process (as per direct aid salience shocks), these changes processes rely more on ‘permissive conditions’ at the domestic and international levels. In the forthcoming chapter, these differences will be further explored. In many ways, then, the ‘Elite Hobby’ aid salience shock and the aid policy change it created reflected more fundamental changes occurring in the Netherlands and its society. Nonetheless, Wilders’ agency was required to initiate and sustain these specific aid policy changes.

Geert Wilders’ opposition to the 0.7% target was one of the means by which he “seized the mantle of radicalism by positioning [his party] as the only force that dares to challenge an out-of-touch political establishment” (Polakow-Suransky 2016). Wilders ability to influence the political agenda meant that his politicisation of the 0.7% target had powerful and far-reaching effect on aid policy decisionmaking in dynamics during the late 2000s and early 2010s.

Wilders’ framing meant that the Dutch development cooperation debate was reduced to a simple political test: whether one supported the 0.7% target or not. This placed the reformers – of which there were many, especially in the CDA – in a difficult position. Those who remained supportive of development cooperation in general, but who accepted significant reforms were

necessary found it almost impossible to articulate this relatively nuanced position given the parameters Wilders had constructed around the public debate. Wilders' politicisation of the 0.7% had created an environment that stifled anything other than a one-dimensional debate where only the most extreme positions could 'cut through'.

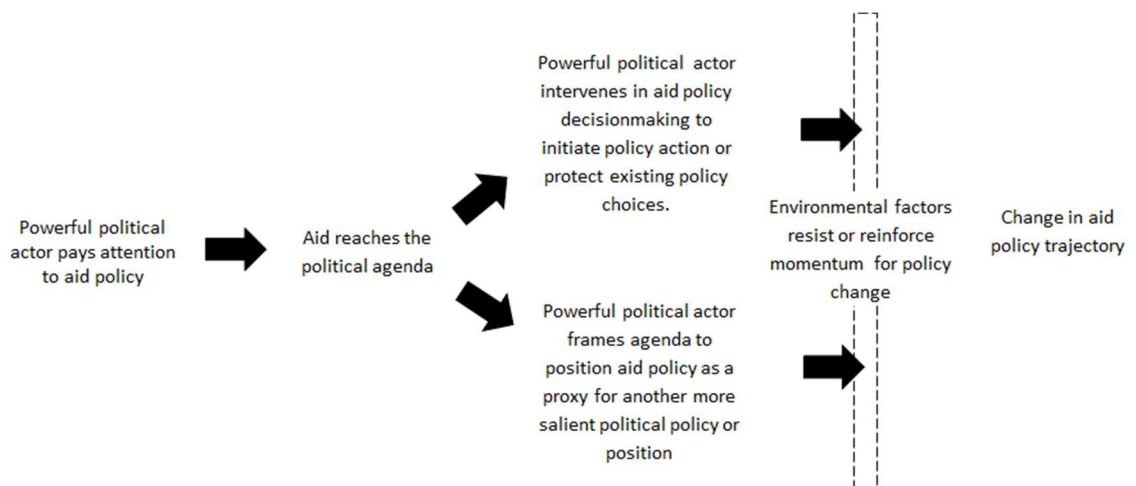
What we see, therefore, by taking an actor-specific perspective to examining aid policy dynamics in the Netherlands, is just how interlocked factors from each level of analysis were in contributing to the decision to enact aid policy change. Wilders' personal impact upon the political agenda was immense. His reframing of the 0.7% target then led to a cascade of domestic political responses, chief among them splitting the CDA. We then see that ongoing efforts to make Dutch development cooperation 'fit for purpose' in a rapidly changing world were not really able to take root until the 0.7% target had been set aside politically. Furthermore, the context for all of these events was the questioning of Dutch identity that began in earnest in the aftermath of the 'long year of 2002'. In the forthcoming chapter, I examine some of these interactive dynamics in more detail by highlighting some of the factors that play a key role in mediating the impact of aid salience shocks across not only the Netherlands, but also Australia and the United Kingdom.

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8 Aid Salience Shocks in Comparative Perspective

This chapter concludes Part II of the thesis by conducting a comparative analysis of **aid salience shocks** based on the material presented in chapters 5, 6 and 7. The chapter connects the empirical narratives of **aid policy** change in Part II with the theoretical explanations advanced in Part I. The model at figure 8.A (which reproduces figure 4.A. from earlier in the thesis) is the device around which these connections are drawn out.

Figure 8.A: Aid Salience Shocks as Pathways to Aid Policy Change



The theory of aid policy change advanced by this thesis views individual actors as the ultimate progenitors of foreign policy change (Hudson 2014, 7)⁴⁹⁹. Yet adopting this perspective does not imply that domestic and international factors are redundant. As I stressed in chapters 2 and 3—and as the model at Figure 8.A depicts—a complete account of an instance of aid policy change requires multilevel integration, where the influence of factors at each level are considered. Nonetheless, an **actor-specific theory** begins with the individual decisionmaker, who ‘funnels’ factors from across all levels of analysis when arriving at an **aid policy decision** (subsection 3.2.2). As Busby (2007, 20) has pointed out, “[w]hile systemic incentives shape and shove states,

⁴⁹⁹ Hudson (2014, 7) conveys how “[t]he perspective of FPA is that the source of all international politics and all change in international politics is specific human beings using their agency and acting individually or in groups.”

domestic-level constraints coupled with the agency of actors themselves are important if we wish to explain foreign policy outcomes.”

Reflecting the nature of this funnelling process, the three sections that comprise this chapter step through each level of analysis in turn. As we will see, however, the interlinkages between factors operating between and across levels are significant. In reality, decisionmakers compute the nature of the constraints and opportunities they face at a given time in a much more instantaneous and integrated manner that we are able to here. Nonetheless, organising this account according to levels of analysis not only links the present discussion more clearly to earlier ones in chapters 3 and 4 but also allows me to highlight key findings about the way in which a number of specific factors decisively influenced the aid policy change process *across* each of the case study countries. In this way, I can demonstrate how the empirical material presented to this point in Part II conforms to the dynamics illustrated in Figure 8.A. As a reminder of the characteristics of the seven aid salience shocks being compared in this chapter, Table 8.A reproduces Table 1.B from earlier in the thesis.

Table 8.A: Aid Salience Shocks Documented in this Study

	#	Name	Key Political Actor/s (position/s)	Type	Timeframe	Impact on Aid \$
Australia	SS1	Rudd aid salience shock	Kevin Rudd (Labor Party Leader, Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs)	I	2006-2012	Increase
	SS2	Budget deficit aid salience shock	Tony Abbott (Prime Minister) Joe Hockey (Treasurer)	II	2013-2014	Decrease
	SS3	Liberal Party factionalism aid salience shock	Tony Abbott (Liberal Party Leader/Prime Minister) Julie Bishop (Deputy Liberal Leader/Minister for Foreign Affairs)	II	2011-2014	Decrease
United Kingdom	SS4	Short aid salience shock	Clare Short (Shadow/Secretary of State for International Development)	I	1997-2003	Increase
	SS5	Cameron-Mitchell aid salience shock	David Cameron (Conservative Party Leader/ Prime Minister) Andrew Mitchell (Shadow/Secretary of State for International Development)	I	2006-2013	Increase
	SS6	‘Tory modernisation’ aid salience shock	David Cameron (Conservative Party Leader / Prime Minister)	II	2006-2013	Increase
NED	SS7	‘Elite hobby’ aid salience shock	Geert Wilders (Leader of the Party for Freedom, PVV)	II	2008-2012	Decrease

Overall, the comparative analysis conducted in this chapter seeks to fortify three interrelated arguments made throughout the thesis. First, the analysis demonstrates how adopting an actor-

specific perspective can generate new insights into which factors matter in determining the aid giving behaviour of states, and when and how they do. Second, the analysis emphasises how factors from all levels of analysis are constantly interacting to inform aid policy dynamics, revealing how an integrated, multilevel approach is required to comprehensively explain instances of aid policy change. Third, the analysis reinforces the utility of the concepts introduced by this thesis in explaining aid policy change. Connected to this, the second section of this chapter also engages in some further preliminary theorising about the notion of the aid ‘**salience sweet spot**’ as a concept for making sense of the proclivity for aid policy decisionmaking to function as the site of elite contestation.

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8.1 Individual Level Factors

The essence of the argument this thesis advances is that states change the trajectory of their aid policy when powerful individual political actors pay sustained attention to aid policy issues. This constitutes an actor-specific explanation of change. As Figure 8.A conveys, variations in attention (**decider salience**) trigger the process of major aid policy change (an aid salience shock). I have identified two means through which this alteration in attention is initiated. Type I aid salience shocks occur when a powerful actor seeks to change aid policy in accordance with their policy preferences (the top pathway in Figure 8.A), whereas Type II aid salience shocks emerge when a powerful political actor sees changes in aid policy as a means for achieving another political end (the bottom pathway in Figure 8.A).

The three subsections of this section of the chapter unfold as follows. In the first subsection, I canvass the seven salience shocks traced during chapters 5, 6 and 7 to examine how agency operates in direct (type I) salience shocks versus indirect (type II) salience shocks. This discussion then opens the way for a subsection which engages in further theoretical reflection. Here I further delineate the scope conditions of the new concepts the thesis proposes by differentiating them from the ‘policy entrepreneurs’ framework for explaining policy change. Finally, I examine how small group dynamics influenced aid policy change across my cases. Here we begin to recognise how even the most powerful political actors are hemmed in by constraints they can never fully control. As will become increasingly apparent as we step through factors

from higher-order levels of analysis later in the chapter, agency is always contingent, regardless of how powerful an individual political actor might appear to be.

8.1.1 Agency and Aid Policy Change

Agency and Direct (Type I) Aid Salience Shocks

A direct (Type I) aid salience shock is triggered when an individual political actor is personally motivated to change aid policy in a certain direction. Yet while harbouring such motivation is a necessary condition for the emergence of a direct salience shock, it is clearly not sufficient. Comparing the three type I aid salience shocks reveals that the ‘power threshold’ for being able to initiate and sustain this type of salience shock is very high indeed. This pathway for aid policy change can only be navigated by individual actors at the very top of the political hierarchy—by leaders of major political parties (as Kevin Rudd and David Cameron were) or else an individual with a similarly powerful remit to set policy direction. My research indicates that ministers (or shadow ministers) responsible for development cooperation are very unlikely to wield enough power on their own to single-handedly trigger an aid salience shock. Even Clare Short, one of the most politically powerful individuals to hold such a position, required the ‘political cover’ of supportive leadership to direct significant policy change⁵⁰⁰.

My finding about the relative lack of independent influence of development ministers (or those ministers responsible for aid policy) on aid spending is reinforced by recent research quantitative research conducted by Fuchs and Richert (2017), which analyses 300 ministers responsible for development aid across OECD DAC member countries since 1967. These authors argue that “[i]f development ministers possess sufficient power to overcome the constraining influences of other actors, their personal characteristics will affect the quantity and quality of aid”. However, their research finds that “development ministers’ personal characteristics do not seem to matter much with regards to the quantity of ODA” (Fuchs and Richert 2017, 3). In a complementary recent qualitative study, Breuning has shown how Reginald Moreels, a former Belgian State Secretary for Development Cooperation who was passionate about reforming aid policy, was unable to do so given the nature of his interactions with cabinet and, to a lesser extent, the limitations placed on his agency by the ‘bureaucratic web’ he operated within (Breuning 2013, 311). My cases suggest, therefore, that for development ministers to foster major aid policy change, they need to partner very closely with the leader of a major political party. Andrew Mitchell’s partnership with David Cameron is clearly the epitome of this arrangement.

⁵⁰⁰ This does not imply that Development Ministers working under a supportive leader will automatically effect change. Instead it implies that the presence of a supportive leader it is one of the preconditions that must be in place for development ministers.

The high threshold of influence required to initiate a direct aid salience shock is further emphasised when one considers the remarkably similar circumstances that allowed both Kevin Rudd and David Cameron to exercise a higher than normal degree of personal control over the political agendas of their respective parties once they became leader. Crucially, both men were elected to the party leadership after their respective parties had experienced a prolonged absence from power. Rudd became Labour's leader following four conservative federal election defeats, at a time when John Howard's Prime Ministership was over a decade old. When Cameron assumed the Tory leadership, the Conservatives had lost three consecutive elections and Tony Blair had served as Prime Minister for eight-and-a-half-years.

Rudd and Cameron each overcame leadership opponents viewed as 'safer choices' (Kim Beazley and David Davis, respectively) because their colleagues had reached a point where they were willing to take political risks to rejuvenate their electoral prospects. Rudd and Cameron each represented a 'new direction' for their respective political parties and, because each were closer to the political centre than many party members, they had the potential to broaden the electoral base beyond rusted-on supporters. As personal embodiments of party change, Rudd and Cameron were afforded a higher-than-usual degree of control over the political agenda, particularly in the early 'honeymoon' stages of their leadership. As we have seen, both men used this leverage to place aid issues on the agenda. Cameron made achieving the 0.7% target a component of part of his program of 'Tory modernisation', while Rudd literally 'doubled down' on John Howard's aid expansion with his 0.5% promise. Both men made these commitments very early in their tenures as Opposition Leader and deployed them as political differentiators. In both cases, these commitments would become examples of "symbolic politics" (Busby 2010, 50), illustrating just how connected the agency of these leaders was intertwined with prevailing political conditions.

Precisely because their aid commitments operated as political signifiers, achieving aid spending targets soon became a matter of personal political trust for both politicians. Rudd and Cameron were personally associated with the aid spending targets to the extent that their ongoing political credibility was tied up in reaching them. This then becomes an avenue by which aid policy issues become a site of political contestation, connecting factors from the first and seconds levels of analysis. Given Rudd and Cameron were clearly personally responsible for putting aid issues on the agenda, their personal policy choices became a proxy for evaluating their 'political judgement'. As discussed in greater detail below, this had especially important domestic political ramifications in terms of intraparty factional positioning (see section 8.2.1).

Cameron was conscious of the symbolic implications of his aid policy choices. By the time he became Prime Minister, he knew that achieving the 0.7% target had become irrevocably tied to his personal and political credibility. It is instructive that Cameron took particular notice of how Rudd's popularity as Prime Minister plummeted in 2010 when he backed away from his high profile promises to tackle climate change (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 7873)⁵⁰¹. The timing of Rudd's downfall following his abandonment of his promise to introduce an Emissions Trading Scheme is significant. Coming just months before Cameron and the Quad deliberated on the 2010 Spending review, it meant that Cameron was especially motivated by the "desire to keep promises" as he considered where to allocate budget cuts (Seldon and Snowdon 2015, Loc 7873). What emerges here is how credibility is important in driving foreign policy change—something that is recognised in the policy entrepreneurship literature (Mintrom and Luetjens 2017).

The most importantly similarity between Rudd and Cameron was their shared personal desire to see aid spending increased. Crucially, I found that the three progenitors of direct aid salience shocks examined in this thesis—Rudd, Cameron and Clare Short—married a strong desire to enact aid policy change in a particular direction with a high capability for doing so. These individuals furthered their policy objectives by intervening in aid policy decisionmaking both to *initiate* policy reforms and *protect* the policy reforms they initiated.

By *initiating* aid policy reforms, these actors 'locked in' path dependencies that helped secure their desired aid policy trajectories. As discussed in the opening section of chapter 6, Clare Short was instrumental in establishing DFID, an institutional change that helped ensure that additional attention and financial resources would flow to the aid policy area. This reform represented the foundational move in the development of the 'Issue-Ownership Spiral' that propelled the UK towards achieving the 0.7% target. Other key steps in furthering the 'Issue-Ownership Spiral' were taken by Cameron, alongside Andrew Mitchell. Cameron initiated the Globalisation and Global Poverty Policy Group, while Mitchell initiated and sustained Project Umubano. Cameron initiated the Tory commitment to 0.7% and was also responsible for coining the 'aid ringfence'. Not only did Rudd personally secure 0.5% as Labor Party Policy while Opposition leader, he remained remarkably engaged in aid policymaking while in leadership positions. These examples

⁵⁰¹ George Megalogenis (2010, 4) writes that: "Kevin Rudd had presented [climate change] as our greatest moral and economic challenge. So when he shelve his emissions trading scheme (ETS) in April [2010], without so much as a sit-down press conference to explain why, his personal approval rating collapsed." As highlighted in chapter 5, MacDonald (2012, 2013a) provides further background on Rudd's back down on climate change.

also illustrate the importance of persistence as a trait of individual change agents (Carter and Scott 2009, 26).

Yet just as important as the ‘offensive’ policy steps these individuals took to embed aid policy change were the defensive ones they took to protect progress. In fact, these individual actors required more authority to protect aid policy reforms than initiate them. For example, Short’s success in passing legislation to ensure DFID’s poverty reduction focus was protected by law ensured the department’s *modus operandi* would remain distinct. Cameron’s authority within the Quad ensured he was able to veto attempts to abandon the 0.7% target. And Rudd’s ability to protect aid spending, both while Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, is a key reason why Australia’s aid spending expansion lasted as long as it did. Yet perhaps the best demonstration of the significance of the ‘political protector’ role was provided by Rudd’s resignation. Once Rudd relinquished his position of authority, the aid expansion he had championed became extremely vulnerable, with aid cuts beginning almost immediately. The idea of Cameron and Rudd as ‘political protectors’ resonates with the notion of ‘veto players’ in the policy studies literature and closely associated with the work of George Tsebelis (2002).

The comparison between Rudd and Cameron undertaken here also serves to highlight that no direct aid salience shocks emerged in the Netherlands over the period of study. More than merely a product of coincidence, this reflects how political leaders in Westminster systems are able to exercise power with less constraints than their Dutch counterparts. As Kaarbo (2013, Loc 1549) has explained:

“Dutch prime ministers are less powerful than their counterparts in other parliamentary systems. The dynamics of coalition government, the collegial political norms, the lack of a sizable staff, and the inability to appoint or remove cabinet ministers make for a fairly weak prime minister.”

As highlighted in chapter 7, Dutch policy making has a syrupy quality—referred to as *stroperigheid*—that typically sees policy change move more slowly than Australia and the UK. In such circumstances, the likelihood of type I aid salience shocks emerging appears to be less, based on the evidence in this thesis. Once again, this shows how the scope for agency is intricately tied to the nature of the institutional settings individual actors operate in.

Agency and Indirect (Type II) Aid Salience Shocks

Enacting an indirect aid salience shock requires an individual political actor to wield a different type of influence than required to generate a direct aid salience shock. Rather than exercising power ‘behind the scenes’ by controlling decisionmaking processes, progenitors of indirect aid saliences shocks act overtly, seeking to frame how an aid policy issue is viewed by

communicating it in a particular way (Entman 1993, 52). As per direct aid salience shocks, a high threshold of influence is also required to initiate an indirect aid salience shock. Once again, I found that it was individual actors at the level of party leader who were responsible for triggering and sustaining the four indirect aid salience shocks detailed in the thesis.

The ability of Geert Wilders to generate a powerful indirect aid salience shock demands special attention. Wilders' dominance of the public aid policy debate in the Netherlands is just one manifestation of his capacity to influence the Dutch political agenda. "Wilders' talent for attracting media attention" (Vossen 2017, 101) has been a defining feature of the Dutch political landscape since the 'cultural trauma' of the early 2000s. Ian Traynor, who covered the 2010 election for *The Guardian* newspaper, observed how "[t]he entire Dutch political conversation currently pivots around Wilders, whether in support of him or in reaction to his outspoken calculated controversy"⁵⁰². Koen Vossen's (2017, 89) research reveals that "[b]etween 2007 and 2010, Geert Wilders saw his name in Dutch newspapers more often than any other Dutch politician with the exception of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende." And this was despite being only the "party chair of the fifth largest party in the country" (Vossen 2017, 89).

Wilders' influence derives, in part, from his skilful exploitation of parliamentary rules and procedures to generate attention. He marries an "enormous passion for parliamentary politics" (Vossen 2017, 87) with a deep knowledge about parliamentary processes gained through years as a VVD parliamentary adviser. But perhaps most important, he views parliament in an entirely different way than other Dutch politicians. Vossen (2017, 87) quotes CDA politician Jan Schinkelshoek as describing the PVV as viewing parliament "as 'a political café, a platform for mobilising dissatisfaction amongst voters', while the other parties were used to seeing the *Binnenhof* [where the Dutch legislature is located] as 'a market where you negotiate, where you have to make decisions'"⁵⁰³.

⁵⁰² This has been the case virtually since 2004, when Wilders resigned as an MP after irking many of his VVD colleagues by proposing a ten-step plan to shift the party further right (Vossen 2017, 36).

⁵⁰³ Wilders treats parliament as a theatre for attracting attention. Wilders' proposed 'headrag' tax—"an attempt to regulate the headscarf in the Netherlands" (Korteweg 2013, 759)—is a prime example of how Wilders used the platform provided by parliament to advocate a policy which, while being politically and legally impossible to enact, nonetheless conveyed a symbolic meaning⁵⁰³. Wilders regularly employed these tactics, including in the reframing of the 0.7% target. As Korteweg has documented, Wilders "manipulates the press" by deploying "pithy, quotable responses" during "highly mediatized events like Parliamentary debates" (Korteweg 2013, 765). Led by Wilders, the PVV introduced "its own recognisable idiom" featuring terms such as "Islamisation, 'left-wing hobbies' and 'Henk and Ingrid'" (Vossen 2017, 90). The PVV consciously and continuously pushes the "boundaries of parliamentary mores, for instance by threatening to sue the government and by filibustering" (Vossen 2017, 96). Wilders also judiciously limits his own domestic media appearances, meaning his pronouncements in parliament have more impact.

Wilders' ongoing willingness to speak out and his skill in attracting attention when doing so were clearly factors in his capacity to influence Dutch political discourse. Yet his ability to shape the **political agenda** is also the product of several contingent factors, a number of which Wilders had no role in. For example, Wilders' political rise was arguably made possible only through the prior influence of Pim Fortuyn. Wilders perfected a template that Fortuyn provided. The sequence of 'focussing events' in the first half of the 2000s, following the 'the Long Year of 2002' also aided Wilders' rise.

A less obvious, but no less important, reason why Wilders is able to exert such influence over the political agenda relates to his personal dominance of the Party for Freedom (PVV). The party was established as vehicle for realising Wilders' personal political ambition, and remains so. As Vossen (2017, 1) writes:

"there is probably no other party so intrinsically linked with its leader as Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom. Not only is Wilders the founder, chairman, leading candidate and figurehead of the party, he is officially its only member. In a legal and literal sense, this makes the PVV a one-man party."

Wilders enjoys complete control over party policies and messaging in a manner which, at times, is likely the envy of party leaders who front more traditional, democratic, casually-driven parties. Wilders is free to speak his mind and court controversy in a way that is impossible for his political counterparts. He can follow "a strategy of confrontation and conflict" that allows him to stand out "in a political culture traditional characterised by consensus and negotiation" (Vossen 2017, 166). And despite the mismatch in party structures, the Party for Freedom and the 'Big Three' traditional parties are all subject to the same rules when it comes to the Dutch electoral process.

This leads to a final point about Wilders' influence being magnified by the Dutch system of proportional voting. Precisely because any support Wilders receives is immediately transferred into representation at elections, Dutch political parties are obliged to respond. This is the essence of the 'Wilders effect', which has had an "immense" impact on the other parties (The Economist 2017), incentivising them to move to the right (Mudde 2017). In sum, it means that "mainstream parties having to shift towards an agenda and policies he is dictating" (Traynor 2010a). This is precisely what chapter 7 documented as having occurred in the realm of aid policy. Wilders' confrontational rhetoric forced the mainstream parties to address issues which had been consciously avoided. Once these issues reached the political agenda, the mainstream parties then fractured, usually along factional lines, about how to respond. Wilders of course, did not need to concern himself with managing internal factions, as his party essentially had none.

8.1.2 Comparing Aid Salience Shocks: Theoretical Reflection

In chapter 4, I theorised the distinctions between two ideal types of aid salience shocks. The essence of these distinctions were conveyed in Table 4.B. To facilitate the following discussion, I have reproduced this table below as Table 8.B. In this subsection, I draw on the comparative analysis above to draw out additional theoretical distinctions in the two types of aid salience shocks. In a further complementary step, I also seek to further delimit the scope conditions for the operation of the aid salience shock concept by considering how these ideas are distinct from the concept of policy entrepreneurs.

Table 8.B: Two Types of Aid Salience Shocks

	Direct Aid Salience Shocks	Indirect Aid Salience Shocks
Classification	Type I	Type II
Why initiating political actor/s seeks to put aid policy on political agenda	Initiating actor is personally motivated to change aid policy in a certain direction.	Initiating actor sees an opportunity to politicise aid policy.
Posture of initiating political actor/s	“What can I do for aid?”	“What can aid do for me (and my political cause)?”
Key means of influencing desired policy change	Direct intervention in the aid policy decisionmaking process, either to initiate policy action or protect existing policy choices.	Framing of agenda to position aid policy as a proxy for another more salient political policy or position.
Preconditions for action	A powerful political decisionmaker/s has the inclination and opportunity to intervene in aid policy decisionmaking to further an aid-related policy agenda.	When taking a position on aid policy issue represents a relatively low-cost way for initiating actor to position themselves/their party in a politically beneficial way in relation to a more salient political issue or position.

When digesting the stories of aid policy change presented in Part II, the easiest way to differentially differentiate whether a direct (type I) or indirect (type II) aid salience is in operation is to identify the motivation of the initiating actor. As intimated by the theory, the driving motivation behind why a powerful political leader directs their attention toward aid dictates the way the change process proceeds. It is also striking that the initiators of all three direct aid salience shocks were all personally motivated to increase aid spending. This empirical pattern suggests that direct aid salience shocks have a proclivity to lead to aid increases. Theoretically, this pattern can be explained by the fact that enacting increases in aid can be assumed to be more difficult than achieving decreases in aid spending because of the low salience of aid (and the related ‘rules of the game’ outlined in section 4.4). This reality would prevent leaders without a strong motivation to *increase* aid spending from trying in the first place. From the opposite perspective, it is difficult to imagine that a powerful politician who would prefer to *reduce* aid would use their

limited political capital little to enact what might be seen as an 'easy' policy win of reducing aid for purely for personal reasons. Instead, they are more likely to reduce aid as a secondary component of a broader policy shift, for example a shift reflective of ideology (as undertaken by Tony Abbott, for example).

In contrast to the finding that direct aid salience shocks are likely to increase aid salience shocks, three of four indirect aid salience shocks examined brought downward pressure on aid spending. As indicated by their name, during indirect salience shocks, the initiating actor/s have a much more indirect role in shaping policy choices. So, whereas the initiators of direct aid salience shocks effect change via through direct involvement in aid policy decisionmaking processes, powerful political actors who seek or choose to effect change through reframing the agenda are much more dependent on the presence of favourable domestic and international conditions, in particular the impact of 'focussing events'. This inevitably means that indirect aid salience shocks will be less predictable than direct aid salience shocks. Anticipating the trajectory of the **salience attachment** process—which I earlier defined as a process whereby an aid policy issue becomes increasingly intertwined with, or symbolically linked to, another more salient issue over time as a result of framing by political actors—is difficult because of its contingent nature. For aid advocates, this suggests that seeking to create conducive conditions to support the emergence of direct aid salience shocks is a more reliable strategy than trying to support instances of change driven by indirect aid salience shocks.

These distinctions aside, it is clear that both types of aid salience shocks seek to understand and describe dynamics that the concept of 'policy entrepreneurs' might be reasonably deployed to study. Given this, it is useful to distinguish the ways in which the concepts I introduce are distinct from this existing tool, which is more prevalent in the policy studies literature and which continues to undergo theoretical development (Mintrom and Norma 2009; Mintrom and Luetjens 2017).

Mintrom and Luetjens (2017, 1) define as policy entrepreneurs as "energetic actors who work with others in and around policymaking venues to promote significant policy change." Immediately it is clear that this broad definition could easily include each of the progenitors of the aid salience shocks traced in this thesis. The question that arises, then, is this: what additional leverage might the concepts of decider salience and aid salience shocks yield? I answer this question by highlighting three key ways in which the concepts I propose provide an analytically distinct perspective from that offered by the policy entrepreneurs framework. In

short, the salience shock framework is conceptually distinct because it is designed to focus on the **politics of attention** for a **political leader** in a **specific policy context**.

The Politics of Attention

In a key article that reviews the “concept of policy entrepreneurship and its use in explaining policy change...” Mintrom and Norman (2009, 649) observe that “[t]he motivations of policy entrepreneurs have gained limited attention to date.”⁵⁰⁴ In contrast, the salience shock model *begins* with the motivation of individual political actors and offers alternative pathways for policy change depending on whether the initiating actor is motivated to change aid policy in a certain direction or to politicise aid policy as part of a broader political strategy. The concept of decider salience was created as a means the measure the degree to which an individual political actor is personally motivated to devote serious and sustained attention to an issue. Furthermore, the salience shock model was developed by explicitly appropriating ideas from the agenda setting literature—most notably by foregrounding the connection between the political agenda and policy change.

Political Leadership

The salience shock model explains the behaviour of a specific type of change agent—the political leaders. In contrast, the notion of policy entrepreneurs is designed to be much more broadly applicable, and extends to any actors engaged in the policy process at any level. That said, I acknowledge—as Mintrom and Luetjens do (2017, 6)—that “political leadership and policy entrepreneurship are not readily distinguished from one another, especially in the case of foreign policy decision-making.” When dealing with party leaders, however (the focus on my study), the politics of attention are unique from other political actors. Party leaders have an outsized influence on the political agenda and therefore their decisions about where to allocate their scarce attention have important bearings on prospects for policy change, especially in low salience domains (refer section 4.4).

A Specific Policy Context

The salience shock model was designed to explain instances of policy change in a circumscribed policy domain. While the concept of policy entrepreneurs was first developed in reference to domestic policy (Kingdon 1995), I developed the concepts proposed in this thesis with the assumption that aid policy constitutes a *sui generis* foreign policy issue area. Most importantly, aid policy is distinguished by its low issue salience and this factor underpins the rules of the game

⁵⁰⁴ In a related comment, Mintrom and Norman (2009, 661) argue that the literature on policy entrepreneurs and policy change has not asked: “Why are people prepared to allocate large amounts of time and energy to activities where great uncertainty surrounds what impacts they will have?” The salience shock model goes some way to explaining this.

governing aid policy decisionmaking dynamics at the strategic level (refer Figure 4.B). These ‘rules’ have important implications for the way leaders exercise agency in this narrow policy domain.

The brief theoretical reflections shared in this subsection have sought to demonstrate that the aid salience shock model and the policy entrepreneurs framework for explaining policy change are similar yet distinct. These reflections are by no means exhaustive. Instead, it is intended that they serve to highlight the potential benefits of continuing to bring these ideas into conversation with one another to further theorise how change happens. As Mintrom and Norman (2009, 663) acknowledge, “the concept of policy entrepreneurship is yet to gain a central place within explanations of policy change.” Furthermore, very little scholarly attention has been paid to “the potential role that policy entrepreneurs play in understanding foreign policy decision-making” (Mintrom and Luetjens, 2017, 1). Clearly this is a potentially fruitful avenue for further exploration. The immediate task at hand, however, is to relate how decision unit dynamics impacted the instances of policy change examined in Part II of the thesis.

8.1.3 Decision Unit Dynamics: The (Financially-orientated) Deliberations of Small Groups

Given the absence of scholarly attention to the role of small group dynamics in determining aid policy, one of the more striking findings of this research is how regularly crucial decisions about aid spending were made in the context of small groups. Important aid spending decisions were taken by the following small groups across the three empirical chapters: the Expenditure Review Committee (ERC), the shadow ERC and the ‘Park Hyatt Group’ in Australia; the ‘Quad’ in the UK; and teams responsible for negotiating coalition agreements (in 2010 and 2012), and the *Catshuis* Agreement in the Netherlands. Decisions made in each of these small group settings had direct and significant impacts on the trajectory of aid policy in each state.

Two substantial points emerge when considering the small groups mentioned above in comparative perspective. The first is the extent to which key decisions on aid policy were made by small groups constituted for the purposes of providing financial oversight. The shape of the **aid policy system** in each state largely determines the exact structure of these groups and the point in the policy process at which they are important. Despite the differences that emerged because of this, Australia, the UK and the Netherlands were alike in having key aid policy decisions made by small groups comprising individuals whose key political responsibilities were economic ones. When these small groups considered aid policy, they did so through the narrow

lens of budgetary considerations. Members are not required to have aid policy (or foreign policy) expertise, and rarely do. Yet, to paraphrase a comment made to me by Frans Bieckmann I shared in Chapter 7, the deliberations of these small groups had “very important” implications for aid policy, despite aid policy being “not important at all” in the deliberations themselves⁵⁰⁵.

What these realities emphasise is how important it is, especially in the absence of any legislated requirements about aid spending levels (as now exists in the UK), for a powerful ‘aid advocate’ to have membership in these small groups if aid spending levels are to stay above ‘status quo’ levels. As highlighted above, it is in these small group forums—usually consisting of between four (e.g. the Quad) to six (e.g. the ERC) members—where the protecting functions of Rudd and Cameron were most important in securing the respective aid spending expansions each oversaw (Treasurer Gordon Brown performed a similar role for Clare Short). Conversely, the absence of a powerful ‘aid protector’ makes it much more likely for aid spending to be cut. In the Australian context, Rudd’s resignation opened the door for Labor to make cuts to aid. Similarly, Julie Bishop was unable to prevent the ERC from making repeated cuts to aid spending during the Abbott Government, despite being the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party and the Foreign Minister. These findings align with the ideas on how ‘veto players’ can be crucial handbrakes on policy change.

The Bishop example links to the second key finding with regards to small group dynamics and aid: that the aid policy dynamics at play within these small groups around are typically microcosms of the broader power dynamics shaping aid policy in the broader polity. The membership of the ERC during the Abbott Government reflected the Conservative wing’s dominance over the moderate wing of the Liberal party, with the attendant prioritisation of budget repair and nationalist (rather than internationalist) perspectives on international engagement. Bishop’s inability to influence the ERC was an indicator of the broader ascendancy of the ideas and priorities of the conservative wing during this period. Furthermore, as discussed in chapter 5, Bishop’s status as a potential leadership contender only added to the sense that these disputes, manifested in battles over aid spending were, in fact, about intraparty politics.

In the Netherlands, we also find that key small groups demonstrate dynamics that are a microcosm of broader political crosscurrents. This was very evidently the case during the *Catshuis* negotiations, where two of the major parties ultimately found it impossible to find a compromise with Wilder’s Party for Freedom. Aid policy emerged as a wedge issue during these

⁵⁰⁵ Personal interview with Frans Bieckmann, November 2014.

negotiations, as it had in Dutch society more broadly. Numerous interviewees also told me that they believed that the outcome of the 2010 coalition formation negotiations also reflected the reduced political status of aid. “It was a political message if you downgrade a minister to a state secretary”, Ms Kitty van der Heidjen told me, reflecting on a key aid policy from the 2010 Coalition Agreement⁵⁰⁶. “It’s a very clear message because state secretaries don’t meet in senior cabinet meetings.” From what I have been able to ascertain, the CDA acquiesced to this ‘downgrade’ in return for maintaining the 0.7% target, which was essentially a repeat of a deal made during coalition negotiations in 2002, the last time the development cooperation post was downgraded⁵⁰⁷. What we see, therefore, is aid policy being caught up in coalition politics (Kaarbo 2013, chapter 4). I return to this notion that aid policymaking is especially prone to becoming a site of elite political contention in subsection 8.2.3, where I propose the concept of an aid ‘salience sweet spot’. More immediately, however, we shift our attention away from individual level factors and towards comparing how domestic level factors shape the trajectory of aid policy change.

§§§

8.2 Domestic Level Factors

The recent focus of the determinants of aid literature has been on ascertaining how particular domestic political factors impacting aid giving (chapter 2). While the stories of aid policy change presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7 feature cameo roles (at least) for many domestic level determinants of aid, in this section I examine two factors that stand out as worthy of more considered comparative analysis, given the extent and degree of their influence in shaping aid saliences shocks across all three case studies. First, I examine the role each state’s **development constituency** played in resisting or reinforcing the momentum for aid policy change. Second, I

⁵⁰⁶ Development Cooperation has traditionally been a Ministerial post in the Netherlands, typically sitting as Minister without portfolio (Kaarbo 2013, Loc 1576).

⁵⁰⁷ The previous coalition agreement which did not have room for a Minister for Development Cooperation (Balkenende I) had also been negotiated with a similar cast of Coalition partners: the CDA, VVD and the far-right Pim Fortuyn List (LPF). The CDA’s spokesperson for development at the time, Kathleen Ferrier, has explained that the CDA then faced a choice of either acquiescing to the downgrading of the portfolio from Ministerial-level to State Secretary-level and keeping the development cooperation budget at 0.8%, or maintaining a Minister for Development Cooperation with a substantially reduced budget (Koenders and Ferrier 2010). The CDA chose the former option. Faced with essentially the same broad negotiating circumstances in 2010, the CDA effectively repeated the decision they made eight years earlier.

highlight how aid became a ‘wedge issue’ within the dominant centre-right political parties in all three case study countries, a phenomenon which I argue is related to conceptions of **national identity**. Then, in the third subsection, I advance the concept of the ‘salience sweet spot’ as a way of explaining the proclivity of aid policymaking to function as the site of elite contestation in the domestic political arena.

8.2.1 The Development Constituency and Aid Policy Change

An important finding of this research is that the strength and character of the development constituency in a state, and especially its political adroitness, shapes the momentum for aid policy change. The comparative size and political strength of the UK development constituency helps explain why the UK was able to achieve a dramatic increase in aid spending. Meanwhile, the lack of influence of the Australian development constituency contributed both to the Australian spending expansion being less secure than it appeared, as well as the rapid spending reversal that transpired after 2013. The Dutch development constituency falls in the middle of the Australian and UK sectors, in terms of influence. But the sense of paralysis that overcame the sector during the mid-to-late 2010s was also a factor leading to the abandonment of the 0.7% target.

The influence of the UK development constituency was such that powerful politicians considered the implications of how the sector would react when making key aid policy decisions. According to David Laws’ account, part of Cameron’s rationale for not backing away from his 0.7% pledge when it was discussed by the Quad ahead of the Autumn Statement in 2012 was that “the NGOs would be really angry and they would mount a huge campaign against us” (Laws 2016, Loc 3250)⁵⁰⁸. Seldon and Snowdon (2015, Loc 7878) confirm that one of the reasons Cameron backs away from change is his “desire to avoid war with charities and non-governmental organisations, including with popular figures like Bob Geldof”. In their biography of Cameron, Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, 279) relate an insightful anecdote about George Osborne. At a lunch in 2008, a friend of Osborne’s purportedly asked him about the 0.7% target. “It’s to keep the aid agencies off my back,” Osborne replied. Whatever the truth of this anecdote—and Ashcroft and Oakeshott do acknowledge that Osborne may just have been placating “a critic at a social gathering”—it conveys how, in the UK, the development constituency has considerably more political clout than in Australia and the Netherlands.

⁵⁰⁸ This expanded meeting of the Quad, for which Laws was present, was held at Chequers on Monday 17 September 2012 (Laws 2016, Loc 3175).

Why is this the case? The most immediately striking feature of the UK development constituency is its relative size and density. The dynamism of the UK's development constituency is a major reason why the United Kingdom is "such an outlier on aid" (D. Green 2015). "For an aid wonk," wrote Oxfam GB's strategic adviser and popular blogger Duncan Green in 2015, "being British means you live, talk and debate in a bubble characterized by a high degree of interest, resources and a constant and exhilarating exchange of ideas" (2015)⁵⁰⁹. Green (2015) has described the presence of a UK aid cluster as akin to a developmental Silicon Valley. Four of the eleven largest international NGOs working in development cooperation are headquartered in (or close to) London—Oxfam International, Plan International, Save the Children and Christian Aid—and together oversee international networks of close to 30,000 staff (Morton 2013, 346). The Department for International Development (DFID), which employs 2700 staff, is now the world's only cabinet-level independent aid ministry. The UK is home to two of the world's largest and most influential international development think tanks, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016. Together these institutions employ over 500 staff, including approximately 200 researchers alongside knowledge professionals and professional staff (Overseas Development Institute 2016, 3; Institute of Development Studies 2016, 42)⁵¹⁰.

Despite its relative size, there is also a coherence and purpose to the UK development sector that is not as apparent in the development constituencies in the Netherlands and Australia. The Dutch and especially the Australian development constituencies are marked by cleavages, splitting into pockets of academics, NGOs, development practitioners, private contractors and aid bureaucrats that impede the sector speaking with a collective voice when seeking to influence government policy. In contrast, the interplay between the components of the UK's development constituency is more pronounced. More than anything, this appears to be a function of the mobility of the UK sector's leadership. The level of cross-pollination and staff movement across the top levels of ODI, IDS and the large NGOS, in particular, is striking, as is

⁵⁰⁹ Furthermore, a decade earlier, the OCED DAC's peer review team recognised the unique setting within which UK development policy was made, observing how "[n]ational dialogue is also flourishing in the current environment, involving a rich assortment of NGO, academic, think tank and other civil society groups" (OECD DAC 2006a, 11).

⁵¹⁰ According to the 2017 QS world university rankings by subject, the University of Sussex, where IDS is located, is the world's leading university for development studies (QS 2017, 39). In a reflection of how the UK has become the global focal point for international development research, innovation and learning, four of the top five ranked development studies universities are in the UK (Sussex, University of Oxford, University of Cambridge and the London School of Economics and Political Science), with an additional two (SOAS University of London and the University of Manchester) also ranking in the top ten (QS 2017, 39). The UK is also a global hub for international development media coverage, too, led by *The Guardian*, which launched a dedicated global development site in 2010, with part-funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation.

the movement between these organisations and government (chiefly DfID)⁵¹¹. Yet, as the current director of the UK Aid Network, Amy Dodd, explained to me, the sector has also been relatively effective in informally delineating a division of labour when it comes to policy, advocacy and campaigning, especially amongst the larger NGOs⁵¹². The UK sector's leadership cohort is distinguished by strong political connections⁵¹³, especially relative to the Australian development constituency, meaning convincing arguments advocating aid are heard more often, and with more authority, at the highest political levels in the UK system⁵¹⁴. Together, these factors contribute to the UK development constituency being considerably more comfortable and effective at wielding political influence than its counterparts in Australia and the Netherlands. The result was that the UK development constituency reinforced the momentum towards 0.7% in the UK.

In contrast, I found that the Australia development constituency's lack of political influence and instincts caused it to make a series of crucial miscalculations that contributed to the downfall of the 'Golden Consensus'. In an article published in 2016 that represents an offshoot of this research project, I argued that the golden consensus proved ephemeral, in part, because this consensus was, like the development constituency that advocated for it, "shallow, narrow and isolated" (Day 2016, 647). Rather than duplicating that argument here, I develop it to show how the Australian development constituency's lack of political nous worked against the realisation of its ultimate objective—to increase Australia aid spending to 0.5%. I do this by outlining four key miscalculations the sector made during the aid expansion overseen by Kevin Rudd.

The Australian development constituency's first miscalculation involved its failure to recognise the political vulnerability of the 'golden consensus' and hence the need to actively work to

⁵¹¹ To illustrate this point, it is instructive to consider the careers of the three most recent executive directors of ODI. Kevin Watkins recently became Chief Executive of Save the Children UK, following his tenure as executive director of ODI. In the early 1990s, he was Head of Research for Oxfam. Watkins' predecessor, Dr Alison Evans, became the Chief Commissioner for the Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) following her tenure at ODI. Evans obtained her PhD from the IDS. Simon Maxwell, who led ODI from 1997 to 2009, had earlier been a senior manager at IDS. Amongst a range of other roles, he is currently an adviser to the Select Committee on International Development.

⁵¹² Personal interview with Amy Dodd, November 2016. BOND, the umbrella body for approximately 450 organisations working in international development in the UK, also plays a key coordinating role in the sector, including hosting increasingly large international conferences that regularly feature keynote addresses from the International Development Secretary.

⁵¹³ Kirsty McNeill, for example, became one of Gordon Brown's chief speech writers after working on Make Poverty History and is now Executive Director of Policy, Advocacy and Campaigns for Save the Children UK. Another example is Justin Forsyth, who was chief executive of Save the Children UK between 2010 and 2015. Before that appointment, Forsyth was Gordon Brown's Strategic Communications and Campaigns Director, coming to that role after a prior stint as an adviser to Prime Minister Tony Blair, who recruited him from a senior policy and campaigns role at Oxfam.

⁵¹⁴ My interactions with UK development experts left me with the impression that, during the Brown and Cameron's premierships, that there might be half-a-dozen individuals working primarily in international development who would be able to get the Prime Minister to personally answer their phone call. With the potential exception of Tim Costello, I could think of no such examples in the Australian context, for example.

broaden, deepen and reinforce it. A form of Groupthink emerged that prevented a realistic appraisal of the politics of aid spending. Peter McCawley, a former Deputy Director General at AusAID, refers to this time as the ‘hubris period’. It appeared to him that “a lot of people in the aid community lost touch with the basic forces of politics in Australia.” By 2010, Graeme Dobell (2010c) was warning that “the new golden aid consensus is being taken by some in the aid lobby as the new normal”. Within the ‘development sector bubble’, which was dominated by idealists who believe deeply in the inherent value of what they are doing, the idea that aid cuts would even be contemplated, let alone enacted, was alien⁵¹⁵, and calls to articulate a more thorough policy rationale for expanding aid beyond simply ‘achieving 0.5’ went unheeded. Professor Hugh White spoke for foreign policy elite when he observed, “there is an uneasy sense that we might all be deluding ourselves [about the rapid aid spending expansion]” (Hugh White 2011). In his view, neither the Independent Review, nor the accompanying Government Response provided a “convincing answer to the bigger underlying questions about the purpose of our aid program and the reason it's growing so fast” (2011)⁵¹⁶.

The sector’s second miscalculation related to its inability to perceive the need to move the consensus, and the surrounding debate, beyond aid volume. Annmaree O’Keeffe, a Deputy Director General at AusAID until 2010, told me that she believed the development constituency was lazy in failing to move the aid discussion beyond volume, suggesting it was much easier to “make a fuss about dollars”, than starting a meaningful debate on policy matters⁵¹⁷. “We never sought to deepen the commitment when the 0.5 came about” admits Andrew Johnson, speaking of the sector as a whole; “we never sought to deepen that commitment inside the Parliament.” Amanda Robbins also lamented the shallowness of the volume-based consensus: “a lot of this high-level, overarching advocacy around the aggregate aid target requires more substantive work to be done on exactly what this implies for policy implementation at the next level down”⁵¹⁸.

A third miscalculation relates to the premature way the sector decided to ‘move on’ from advocacy efforts to secure the aid ramp up in the mistaken belief that enough had been done. Stephen Howes told me how, just after the Independent Review, he and others in the sector

⁵¹⁵ When I asked Amanda Robbins what it was like to move from advising the Treasurer to advising the CEO of World Vision, (in February 2011) she responded: “going to World Vision from the Treasurer’s office made me aware of the bubble that every sector exists in. I would explain to my new colleagues ‘you need to know that this [aid spending expansion] is not sustainable and things will change’ but people were reluctant to listen. Certainly at the senior levels, people would listen, but talking generally across the NGO sector and people who were really focused and committed to fieldwork, many couldn’t believe that even the idea of cuts would be contemplated.”

⁵¹⁶ See also White (2012a, 2012b) and Callick (2011).

⁵¹⁷ Personal interview with Annmaree O’Keeffe, February 2016.

⁵¹⁸ Personal interview with Amanda Robbins, February 2016.

“suddenly detected a kind of loss of interest in [the 0.5%] target by the sector and especially groups like Oaktree and Make Poverty History....” Hugh Evans, who founded Oaktree and was a co-chair of the national Make Poverty History coalition acknowledges that, “[w]ith the benefit of hindsight, we should have maintained a stronger post-success campaign” in order to “consolidate bipartisan support” (quoted in Powell 2014).

The fourth miscalculation made by the development constituency in Australia was to inadvertently create a situation whereby, when aid was eventually cut, no new consensus could be reached: it was either 0.5% or bust. The sector was so heavily invested in the 0.5% target that, when circumstances changed, it lacked the perspective, flexibility or imagination to adapt. Insiders recall that, given the political circumstances, the 2013-14 budget was the best possible result for aid⁵¹⁹. This budget ultimately projected an increase in the aid budget of half-a-billion dollars, the third largest single-year increase in the history of the aid program. However, as Howes (2013b) noted, “[w]e had the third largest increase ever, but the aid community was still disappointed.” When I later asked Howes to explain this anomaly, he explained how, “the problem was, it wasn’t a bad situation for aid, but there was no way to get a new consensus, you couldn’t build the consensus out of the new situation”⁵²⁰. Robbins (2013) would later write that “the aid sector must... bear its share of the blame for sticking with the strategy of significantly increasing the aid budget when it was arguably no longer viable or constructively promoting the cause of international development.”

The reason for highlighting these four miscalculations is to demonstrate how the character of a given development constituency can impact the trajectory of an aid salience shock. Rather than providing additional momentum for the policy change Kevin Rudd initiated, or supplying the changes with extra ballast amongst the elite, the Australian development constituency proved incapable of embedding the very changes it had long advocated for. This stands in stark contrast to the situation in the UK, where the development constituency subtly but steadily provided momentum to the aid policy changes sparked by Clare Short and then David Cameron and Andrew Mitchell. To sum up, the evidence in chapters 5, 6 and 7 shows that the capacity of a development constituency to mobilise in response to a prospective aid spending change, whether to support it (when increases are proposed), or to oppose it (when cuts are floated), will influence whether such a change eventuates.

⁵¹⁹ Personal interviews with Amanda Robbins February, 2016, and Andrew Johnson, November 2015.

⁵²⁰ Personal interview with Stephen Howes, January 2016.

8.2.2 *National Identity: Aid and the Centre-Right*

One of the more unexpected yet interesting findings emerging from this study is how aid spending became a ‘wedge issue’ within the dominant centre-right political parties in all three case study countries—the Liberal Party in Australia, the Conservative Party in the UK, and the Christian Democrats (CDA)⁵²¹ in the Netherlands. Broadly speaking, the conservative wings of each of these parties favoured cuts to aid spending, while the moderate wings desired aid spending to be maintained or increased. More importantly, however, was how positions on aid spending tended to be expressions of other factional conflicts around other contested issues. Positioning on aid spending functioned as a proxy for where intraparty factions stood on issues such as party leadership (Australia and the UK), approach to managing the budget deficit (Australia and the UK), the degree of appropriate cooperation with far-right political parties (the Netherlands) and future party electoral positioning (UK).

In the hypothetical situation where I was required to obtain the best possible impression of aid policy dynamics in a given Western democracy by asking only one question, it would be this: which faction of the dominant right-wing political party is ascendant? The answer to this question appears to capture much of the politics of aid in a given state. My explanation for this is that the centre-right is the location on the political spectrum at which one starts getting a different answer to the more fundamental question of ‘who are we’? At least in the contemporary political moment, this is where it appears that notions of national identity reach their tipping point, especially as they relate to informing how to approach engaging with the outside world.

Marijke Breuning (1995, 236) has shown how “[d]ecision makers' perceptions of their state's role in the international environment form an important cue to the motivations and objectives that determine the policies they pursue”. Across each of the states examined, it is clear that advocating for higher aid spending was the symbolical equivalent of signalling an internationalist orientation towards engaging with the world. The moderate factions of the centre-right parties examined in this thesis were more favourably to this worldview, while the conservative factions were much more reflexively nationalist in orientation. In each state, intraparty conflicts in centre-right parties around aid spending spilled into the open, receiving significant media attention not because they were about aid, but because of what these conflicts portended about more significant issues. In Australia, while the Liberal party were in opposition, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott and his deputy repeatedly clashed on aid spending. Abbott’s failure to

⁵²¹ CDA is the Dutch acronym for *Christen-Democratisch Appèl*.

inform Bishop about proposed cuts to aid called into question her authority. In the UK, Cameron's commitment to the 0.7% was the subject of scorn from a number of MPs on the right of his party, especially as economic conditions deteriorated and defence spending was reduced. And in the Netherlands, we saw how 0.7% became totemic in the divide in the Christian Democrats over whether to partner with Wilders or not.

In the final section of this chapter, I further develop the theme of aid's role in signifying a fundamental posture regarding how to engage with the world. Before moving to those discussions, however, it is worth noting the parallels between the intraparty politics involving aid and those involving climate change. As highlighted in subsection 5.4.1 of chapter 5, the split between the moderate and conservative wings of the Liberal Party of Australia over aid spending mirrored an earlier, more serious, split over climate change—a split which cost then Opposition Leader (now Prime Minister) Malcolm Turnbull his job. A focus on climate change also formed part of Cameron's modernisation program. Views on climate change map closely with those on aid and, in turn, spring from a shared proclivity for an internationalist rather than nationalist global orientation. In light of this, it is interesting to note how McDonald casts Rudd's failure to consolidate an internationalist approach to climate change and asylum in Australia as stemming from an inability to frame these issues in terms of national identity. McDonald (2013a, 113) argues that the Rudd Government failed:

to articulate a broader vision of the world: to link internationalism to a particular conception of Australian identity, for example. In this sense, what might be viewed as missing from Rudd's 'new' foreign policy agenda is an associated conceptualisation of what it means to be Australian, of Australian core values, and of the means through which these can be protected or advanced.

In stark contrast, Wilders proved adept at linking a conception of aid spending with his broader vision of Dutch identity.

8.2.3 The Aid 'Salience Sweet Spot': Aid Policy and Elite Conflict

A strong theme that emerges when examining aid salience shocks in comparative perspective is the extent to which aid policymaking appears remarkably prone to becoming a site of conflict amongst domestic political elites. To link together several of the key findings that emerge in this chapter, as well as to contribute to making the thesis findings more generalisable, I take the time in this subsection to convey the concept of the 'salience sweet spot' and engage in some preliminary theorising about why it exists. As I noted in passing in chapter 1, this term does not imply that aid policy is especially prone to attracting the *attention* of policymakers. Instead, it

seeks to highlight and explain why debates over aid policy issues seem especially capable of triggering discord amongst elites.

I theorise that aid policymaking (especially around aid spending) operates at an optimal level of salience—very low, but not exceedingly so—for making it vulnerable to becoming a site of conflict amongst political elites. It appears that, during aid salience shocks, aid is just salient enough to make ‘playing politics’ with aid policy potentially beneficial, but not so important that the political costs of doing so are prohibitively high. The arena of aid policymaking is therefore uniquely placed to operate as a political ‘escape valve’ of sorts, offering a relatively safe place where internal political conflicts can play out. Repeatedly across the three accounts of aid policy change presented in Part II, a position on aid spending readily becomes a proxy, or signifier, of a policy position regarding another more salient issue. In short, political debates that appear to be about aid are, when thoroughly examined, most often about something else. Table 8.C below illustrates how factors which I highlight as exerting influence on aid policy change across each case study presented in Part II of the thesis do so partly because how readily they can become transformed into a ‘blank canvas’ onto which ideological, factional, political, or personal conflicts are projected.

Table 8.C: The Aid Salience Sweet Spot and Factors Shaping Aid Policy Change

Influencing Factor	Means by which an aid policy decision becomes a site of political conflict	Case Study Example/s
Individual political actors	A decision to commit to an aid spending target becomes closely politically associated with a political leader. Rejection of the target can become somewhat equated with rejection of the leader and vice versa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kevin Rudd’s ‘ownership’ of the 0.5% target (Australia) David Cameron’s ‘ownership’ of the 0.7% target (UK)
Small group dynamics	Small groups with budgetary oversight can use cuts to aid spending to signal the preferences of party leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abbott-era Expenditure Review Committee cuts to aid (Australia) Cameron’s ability to ensure ‘The Quad’ upheld the 0.7% target (UK)
Intraparty Factionalism	A political actor’s position on aid policy functions as a proxy for factional identification.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aid’s role in the split in the CDA on being in coalition with Wilders’ PVV (the Netherlands) Aid’s role in the conflict between the moderate and conservative wings of the Liberal Party during Abbott’s leadership (Australia)
Global Dynamics	Positions on aid policy typically reflect broader orientations regarding preferences for maintaining an inward or outward looking foreign policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wilder’s reframing of the 0.7% target to link it with the ‘elite consensus’ on immigration and European integration (Netherlands)

Ultimately, it is the ‘rules of the game’ that govern the aid policy **issue area** (described in section 4.4) that create the conditions whereby aid policy decisionmaking is liable to becoming a site of

elite political contestation. For the purposes of this discussion, it is useful to reiterate the links between the characteristics of the aid issue area and why this makes aid policymaking prone to elite conflict. First and foremost, aid is a highly discretionary spending item. The effects of aid spending do not directly impact domestic constituents. This makes aid a vulnerable target in times of austerity such as those experienced in each case study country after the Global Financial Crisis. Added to this is the fact that the ostensible target group for development aid has no direct political agency in the aid giving country. This helps explain why debates about aid spending get drawn into wider debates about how to approach austerity, which often break along ideological lines. In this way, debates about aid spending often function as proxy debates for views on appropriate fiscal strategies.

Second, as highlighted in section 8.1, aid policy is highly responsive to agency, so long as a powerful political actor is willing to give it attention. In Corbett's (2017, 7) phrase, aid spending is highly dependent on "executive discretion". The considerable scope for agency enjoyed by political leaders when it comes to aid policy can bring a personal flavour to major aid policy decisions, with attendant political implications. For example, as documented in chapter 5, Kevin Rudd was personally associated with the 0.5% target in Australia, which coloured internal Labor Party views on aid policy, and which had political ramifications for the levels of aid spending once Rudd was deposed as Prime Minister. Likewise, the 'symbolic politics' of the 0.7% target was cultivated and leveraged by both David Cameron and Geert Wilders, albeit for different ends.

Third, because aid is a complicated policy area that political actors typically know very little about, it is especially vulnerable to framing. The lack of media and public attention to aid only increase the likelihood that aid policy positions become caricatured in such a way that they play into existing political debates. A fourth, related, reason why aid policy decisionmaking is liable to becoming a site of political contestation relates to aid policy being the 'swiss army knife' of foreign policy (van der Veen 2011, 2). Aid is a means to potentially achieve multiple (often competing) ends (often at the same time). This means that aid policy can readily accommodate different ideological preferences. What tends to happen is that different political ideologies see different ends of aid as more important than others. It is these ideological differences, rather than aid policy itself, that often dominate internal aid policy debates, especially amongst those not directly involved in aid policy decisionmaking.

While the notion of the aid 'salience sweet spot' is most directly relevant to domestic factors that influence aid policy decisionmaking, I now move to show that it is also useful for

understanding how international level factors are transmitted and absorbed into the domestic context.

§§§

8.3 International Level Factors

Aid salience shocks are shaped by international level factors more subtly than domestic level factors. The task of this section is to demonstrate how international factors “set the stage” for domestic politics to play out and, by extension, condition the way in which powerful political actors are able to exercise agency. This section of the chapter is structured similarly to the previous one, in that I highlight two factors that stand out as worthy of more considered examination. First, I discuss how the **international aid regime** influences aid policy decisionmaking through the enduring symbolic importance of the 0.7% target. I then move to describe how shifts in global power dynamics influence aid policy decisionmaking. Finally, I reflect on how international factors establish the parameters for action for each aid salience shock by limiting what is possible at other levels of analysis.

8.3.1 *The International Aid Regime: 0.7% and its Discontents*

The 0.7% target is paradoxical in numerous ways. It remains the defining standard of the international aid regime and yet few countries meet the target (Hook and Rumsey 2016, 61). The target was relatively arbitrarily set, and yet is often held up as an article of faith by aid supporters. And while it increasingly appears to be an anachronistic measure amidst the rise of the beyond aid agenda (Janus, Klingebiel, and Paulo 2015), the target retains a stubborn hold on domestic political debate, as each case study chapter clearly demonstrated.

The 0.7% target remains the cornerstone of the international ODA regime. Yet in many ways, it acquires its significance because it embodies a suite of agreed norms about the way aid should be provided (Hook and Rumsey 2016). While at the international level, these norms are being challenged by global shifts—I found that the way the target most influenced aid policy decisionmaking was to function as a reference point against which domestic political debates can occur. In short, the 0.7% target has become symbolically loaded at the domestic level too, albeit in slightly different ways across different states.

This research has demonstrated how the 0.7% target is a double-edged sword for politicians and policymakers. The symbolism it carries means that, depending on the political circumstances, having a target in place can drive spending up (like in Australia or the UK) or down (as per the Netherlands). Moreover, as we have seen in the Netherlands, it is possible for the symbolic loadings of the 0.7% target to change over time. Like with many things, the simplicity of the 0.7% target is both its major political strength and its major political weakness. Precisely because of the symbolism the target carries, when declaring a commitment to 0.7% (or 0.5% in the case of Rudd), a politician immediately signifies their commitment to development and their internationalist approach to global engagement. A single number has political cut-through. Owing to its clarity, such a commitment can coalesce supporters and provide the bureaucracy with a clear and measurable objective. Furthermore, if the target is achieved, it represents a clear political victory for advocates.

On the other hand, however, input-driven targets are very blunt tools with which to drive aid policy discussions. Especially at the elite level, there is a clear desire to move the debate beyond this input-driven target (the findings of *Less Pretension, More Ambition* being the obvious example to cite from the empirical chapters). An example of this is how each state considered in the thesis made a point of committing to lobby to change how ODA is measured. An explicit promise to “press in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development for modernising the criteria for Official Development Aid (ODA)” was included in the VVD—PvdA coalition agreement (VVD and PvdA 2012, 20), for example, with Ploumen (2014) responding to an interministerial policy review on the subject two years later. As Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, too, publicly registered her desire to see aid measurement standards change (Bishop 2015).

The most common concern I heard amongst people I spoke with for this interview was how the focus on an input-driven target is liable to crowd out questions of aid quality⁵²². A risk arises whereby reaching a particular spending goal becomes all encompassing. An additional miscalculation made by the Australian development constituency was to focus so intently on the objective of increasing aid volume at the expense of quality (Robbins 2013). This was despite many politicians growing increasingly worried about the ability of AusAID to handle the aid scale up during this period. In the view of Andrew Johnson, head of political relations for World Vision Australia during the period the consensus was breaking down, “[the development sector] was completely disproportionately committed to 0.5[%]”. The advocacy efforts of the development

⁵²² Input-driven policy making is not restricted aid, as Carr and Dean (2013) show in their recent article on the 2% target in Australian defence policy debates.

constituency remained volume-based in part because there was little agreement within the sector about aid priorities beyond the desirability of expanding aid volumes.

This invariably meant that the development constituency, in constantly calling for *more* aid, began to appear self-serving. Amanda Robbins, who moved from a senior public relations role in World Vision to the Deputy Chief of Staff to Treasurer Wayne Swan, saw evidence of this during the preparation of the 2013 budget: “There is a risk that in calling for more aid,” Robbins told me, “[the sector], like every other sector in lobbying government, have to be mindful of their own vested interests.” For political decisionmakers, especially those from the conservative wing of the Coalition, the emergence of what appeared to be an ‘aid lobby’ cast doubt about the extent to which the broader public, and Australia’s national interests, were served by the aid expansion. Ultimately, this became another factor in the decisions to rapidly cut Australia’s aid budget from 2013. Of course, the input-driven focus on the Australian aid expansion also meant it was vulnerable to an economic slowdown, such as that prompted by the Global Financial Crisis.

8.3.2 Global Power Dynamics: The Catalysing Impact of the Global Financial Crisis

By 2007, for the first time in two centuries, the majority of the world’s economic growth took place in the developing world (Ablett and Erdmann 2013, 3). Thanks in part to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), which disproportionately affected the West, the economic ‘rise of the rest’—to use Zarakia’s (2008) phrase—has accelerated remarkably since the turn of the Century. According to Ablett and Erdmann (2013, 4), “the ten years from 2000 to 2010 saw the fastest-ever shift in the world’s economic center [sic] of gravity.”

The GFC derives significance as a marker, or ‘historical hinge’⁵²³, not because the event itself spawned new trends, but because of the distinct way it alerted the broader population to the implications of these existing trends⁵²⁴. Power in the international system has been becoming more diffuse, and shifting from East to West, for a considerable time. The GFC simply made these realities tangible to an audience beyond merely academics and policymakers, acting as a catalyst for more conscious contemplation about how to engage a changing world order.

⁵²³ Increasingly, International Relations scholars are interpreting the GFC as a turning point in the international system. For example, Joseph Nye has noted how, wrongly in his view, many observers “have interpreted the 2008 global financial crisis as the beginning of American decline” (Nye Jr 2010, 2). Other scholars have used the GFC as a temporal marker to assess how global governance is changing by comparing pre-and-post GFC conditions (Woods 2010; Garrett 2010).

⁵²⁴ As Geoffrey Garrett (2010, 29) has remarked, “the geopolitical trajectory of the post-financial crisis era will be the same as it was before.”

It is as if the GFC shocked much of the Western world into facing up to geopolitical reality; they are facing relative decline. Australia, the UK and the Netherlands became increasingly aware of the pending restraint on their agency, acknowledging it plainly in key post-GFC policy documents. Australia's 2013 National Security Strategy recognises that "as the global order shifts, our capacity to shape institutions and forge consensus is more important than ever" (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2013, ii). Britain's 2010 National Security Strategy (Cabinet Office 2010, 4) recognised that, "in order to protect our interests at home, we must project our influence abroad. As the global balance of power shifts, it will become harder for us to do so." *A World the Gain*, meanwhile, conceded that that, "the influence of [the Netherlands] is decreasing due to the emergence of new actors on the world stage" (MFA 2013, 16)⁵²⁵.

The significant change occurring within the international system clearly formed the backdrop to the six decisionmaking episodes recreated by this thesis (refer Table 3.B). Indeed, one of the reasons White-paper type exercises are undertaken is to provide policymakers and experts with the time and space required for considered reflection on how to respond to long term global trends. And, accordingly, a feature of the declaratory policies that emerged from these processes was their detailed assessments of the international environment and the corresponding reflections about how development policy needed to adapt. Yet while I acknowledge these analyses led directly to a degree of aid policy change likely noticeably by practitioners 'on the ground', their impact on the 'strategic level' of policymaking that I considered in this thesis was relatively small. This is not to say that these declaratory outputs were not important or influential. It is simply to say that these aid policy documents did not fundamentally shift the existing strategic level aid policy dynamics. Indeed, rather than shaping them, they more often reflected them.

Nevertheless, I did find that international level factors influenced aid policy decisionmaking, just in a far cruder and rudimentary way than I originally expected. The global financial crisis influenced domestic politics in Australia, the UK and the Netherlands by ratcheting up the attention paid to fiscal decisions. Given the sudden and severe budgetary pressures governments in the UK and the Netherlands and, to a lesser extent, Australia, were facing,

⁵²⁵ Attached to the World acknowledged that the rapid geopolitical shift underway had produced a "fundamental reshuffle in the traditional global balance of power" (Knapen et al. 2011, 18). For the Netherlands, this shift was powerfully illustrated when Indonesia, its ex-colony, became a full member of the G20, which was created to respond to the GFC. Despite having the 16th largest economy in the world, the Netherlands was excluded from this new institution.

choices about where to allocate resources became highly political. Furthermore, the financial vulnerability felt by much of the population during this period merged with a nebulous yet palpable feeling that a “moment of transition” (Cooper 2013, 963) in the international system was underway.

In this environment, the national debate about aid policy, to the extent that it played out in the political arena, was largely reduced to binaries. What is evident across all the case study countries is that, during this period, two broad camps emerged with different views about how best to respond to global change. Essentially, these groups differed on whether they sought security by looking inwards, or looking outwards. The implicit strategies advocated by these groups, then, was retreat and consolidation versus engagement. These cleavages were most obvious in the Netherlands, where the inclination of “voters from the periphery” to ‘retreat behind the dikes’ contrasted with those who believed that the “international orientation” of the Netherlands remained its “crucial source of prosperity and well-being” (Knapen et al. 2011, 107)⁵²⁶. The critical role the GFC played was to enlarge the size and grievances of the former group. As Rob de Wijk, director of The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies was quoted as saying, “[t]he economic crisis has made the country preoccupied with itself...” (Cendrowicz 2010a).

The key point here is this: once the broader nationalist—internationalist binary is activated, aid spending propositions almost inevitably become a proxy for indicating which side of this divide one prefers. Once again, we see evidence of the ‘salience sweet spot’, with aid policy becoming a site of contestation as it is absorbed into a broader debate which is not directly about aid. The same dynamic occurs in another closely related debate which also derives from the fundamental question of ‘how should we engage with the world’? This is because underneath the nationalist—internationalist response to this question lies a bigger questions about national identity. International orientation is fundamentally a function of how a state collectively answers the question of who we are. In the Netherlands case, it was especially apparent that change notions of identity were impacting upon the way the Dutch engaged with the world and then, in turn, their enthusiasm for development spending.

Deeply ingrained notions of national identity also infuse the UK’s aid spending expansion. Mid-way through his tenure as Development Secretary, Andrew Mitchell expressed his desire to see

⁵²⁶ These dynamics were also apparent in Australia and the UK, manifest most obviously in the differing international orientations of the moderate and conservative wings of the Liberal and Conservative parties and what this implied for support of aid spending.

the UK become an ‘aid super power’ (A. Marr 2011; Kirkup 2011; The Economist 2011)⁵²⁷. While Mitchell was ridiculed for this suggestion by some, his comment is nonetheless illustrative of a powerful motivational thread that runs through British international development policy; that of demonstrating British leadership. Since the Second World War, discussions about Britain’s role in the world—specifically related to how to deal with decline—have dominated British foreign policy (Rose 2001; Williams 2005, 3).

DFID’s international renown, and the status this brings the UK, remains a powerful rationale for keeping aid spending at high levels relative to other large donors. As Andrew Mitchell (2015a) recently argued, “[i]n the Department for International Development, we have a unique institution - with the right mandate and funding - which gives the UK world-leading soft power capacity”. One of the explanations for why Cameron took the political risk of increasing aid spending, explains Mawdsley (2015, 348), is because the “UK’s claim to an international leadership role in this arena [negotiating emerging development norms] depends on DFID’s ongoing credibility...”

There is also a sense, however, that Britain’s current leadership in international development traces directly back to its past status as the centre of an empire and a colonial power. Without quite being able to explain exactly how Britain’s colonial legacy infiltrated its current policy choices, many of the interviewees I spoke with nonetheless suggested this was an important factor to take into account. According to Ashcroft and Oakeshott (2015, 285), lifting aid spending, fits “comfortably with the Prime Minister’s patrician view of his role in Britain and the world”. Cameron, these authors assert, “has no difficulty with the concept of *noblesse oblige*”. The notion that with opportunity comes responsibility does seem to resonate strongly with the British elite. Neither Cameron nor Mitchell are particularly religious. And Cameron, in particular, is not especially ideological (Seldon 2014, 115). Yet both men do appear to be driven by a sense of mission, convinced of the innate ‘rightness’ of reducing global poverty and that the UK should be at the forefront of these efforts.

8.3.3 Shaping and Shoving: “Setting the Stage” for Aid Policy Change

For Valerie Hudson (2014, 161), the role international level factors play in explaining foreign policy is akin to the role a stage plays in the presentation of a drama: it is what ultimately sets the parameters for action. Hudson relates how “[c]ertain types of actions by human actors

⁵²⁷ On an appearance on the BBC’s Andrew Marr Show, Andrew Mitchell specifically clarified that he had advocated for Britain becoming a ‘development superpower’, not an ‘aid superpower’.

become more or less likely depending upon the layout of the stage and its props”. History shows us that international level conditions have always “set the stage” for aid policy making. The task of European reconstruction dominated in the aftermath of World War II. Strategic imperatives governed aid giving during the Cold War. After the Berlin Wall fell, the relevance of aid was questioned, only for its role to be repurposed as a tool for collective progress. A focus on poverty reduction was enshrined with the adoption of the MDGs.

Now, with the international system again in a ‘moment of transition’ (Cooper 2013, 963), the stage the aid policy story is playing out on is again uncertain (Eyben and Savage 2013, 457). The world is undergoing a scene change. In many ways, the GFC signalled the opening of the curtain for a new act. As discussed above, the systemic shifts that the GFC confirmed – the sheer reach of globalisation and the dramatic shift in power from West to East – opened new domestic political fissures. These changed conditions forced states and the people within them to reassess core questions. Who are we? Where are we going? The responses to these questions of national identity had direct implications for the politics of aid. Key new binaries emerged in domestic political debates across each of the states examined in this thesis and in the West more broadly. Especially in the Netherlands, the role of aid was drawn into much bigger debates about international orientation.

International factors set the scene for each aid salience shock examined. In each case, these factors set the broad parameters for domestic political debate. These parameters proved more important for indirect aid shocks, which depend on the framing efforts of a powerful political actor. In the cases of the budget deficit aid salience shock (SS4) and the ‘elite hobby’ aid salience shock (SS7), for example, aid issues were co-opted and actively politicised using framing strategies that linked them to the impact of the GFC and the internationalist-nationalist divide respectively. The process of salience attachment in these cases—where an aid policy issue becomes increasingly intertwined with, or symbolically linked to, another more salient issue over time as a result of framing by political actors—depends on the prevailing international climate.

Yet even if the influence of international factors was more direct for some aid salience shocks compared to others, it is clear they were decisive in all cases. This is because international factors shape the domestic political terrain—the very terrain in which powerful political leaders operate within and in which they develop their **personal salience profiles**. These profiles are inevitably formed with reference both to what a political leader believes is important, as well as what they

believe to be politically feasible. In turn, these considerations are then inputs into the determination a leader makes about where they should focus their limited attention.

Finally, it is very easy to overlook the fact that the international norm of 0.7% “sets the stage” for all the aid salience shocks this thesis examines. Indeed, this norm is the backdrop for the thesis itself. The extent to which the politics of aid responds to this enduring symbol of aspired-to generosity, despite its arbitrary definition and questionable relevance, is remarkable. Despite the best efforts of politicians and advocates to reframe the aid debate, the gravitational political hold of the 0.7% target endures. In itself, this represents an important finding of this thesis. As many interviewees relayed to me, the fact that aid policy revolves around this target to such an extent is not only of questionable benefit, but acts as a key blockage to creative thinking about how development should be conceived and pursued.

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8.4 Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter, I highlighted a quote from Joshua Busby that is worth revisiting as I conclude. “While systemic incentives shape and shove states,” Busby (2007, 20) writes, “domestic-level constraints coupled with the agency of actors themselves are important if we wish to explain foreign policy outcomes.” What Busby is saying is that to fully appreciate why a given foreign policy outcome eventuated requires adopting multilevel perspective. By examining the stories of aid policy change told in the previous chapters, and comparing the aid salience shocks which animate these narratives, this chapter has provided further evidence that aid salience shocks are a conceptual device which can provide such a perspective. Moreover, they also function to help to identify which factors matter in determining aid policy change.

Hudson (2014, 221) argues that “FPA is dedicated, among other things, to the “seeing” of human agency, human accountability, and human creativity.” Aid salience shocks are conceptual devices through which to see how human agency triggers aid policy change. Yet while aid salience shocks begin with the individual actor, they do not end there. The concept also provides a lens through which the influence of domestic and international factors affecting aid policy change can be detected. The comparative analysis conducted in this chapter has highlighted the

most important of these factors for the seven aid salience shocks traced through chapters 5, 6 and 7.

At the individual level, it is the attention of powerful political actors that initiates major aid policy change. At the same time, the dynamics that operate in the small groups that have financial oversight authority for aid are much more important than previously recognised. At the domestic level, the political sophistication of a state's development constituency helps determine whether aid spending levels are politically sustainable. Another finding is that aid policy dynamics are particularly fraught at the point in the political spectrum where the moderate and conservative factions of right-wing parties meet. The concept of the aid salience sweet spot was also introduced to help make sense of the proclivity for aid policy to function as a site of elite political contestation at the domestic level. At the international level, the 0.7% target powerfully sets the scene for the politics of aid. So do global power shifts, which cause states and the people in them to reassess how to engage in the world, activating new binaries that frame domestic political debate in new ways. In sum, the pathway to aid policy change conceptualised by an aid salience shock is one which involves the interaction of factors operating at each level of analysis.

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9 Conclusion

It was one of the great myths of that time that foreign policy was this pure and uncontaminated area which was never touch by domestic politics...

—David Halberstam, 1993⁵²⁸.

The Australian National University recognises the start date of my doctoral studies as 28 March 2013. Yet as this project has neared its completion, and as I have reflected more intentionally on my thesis journey, I am increasingly convinced that the real ‘start date’ of this thesis was August 2009. It was then, during a three-year stint living and working in Papua New Guinea as ‘aid workers’, that my wife Laura and I visited Mount Hagen for a weekend to attend the cultural celebrations of the Mount Hagen show.

While the show itself was an amazing experience, my most vivid memories of that weekend are of being engrossed in David Halberstam’s account of how the U.S. became entangled in the Vietnam War, *The Best and the Brightest*. The way Halberstam presented incredibly detailed and penetrating personal portraits of key decisionmakers in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, and then layered these into a broader narrative documenting how the contingent pressures of domestic politics and shifting international conditions impacted upon them, was enthralling. Given my circumstances at the time, I naturally drew parallels between the world Halberstam described and the ‘aid world’ I inhabited. In particular, I related the discrepancies Halberstam highlighted between what was happening ‘on the ground’ in Vietnam and in Washington D.C., to the discrepancies that I was increasingly becoming aware of between what was happening in Australia’s aid program ‘on the ground’ in Papua New Guinea versus in Canberra.

Looking back, it was reading Halberstam that marks the beginning of a concerted interest in trying to understand how decisions are made in the world of aid. At the most foundational level, this study is an outworking of that curiosity. This conclusion continues this process of reflection by putting this thesis in context across three dimensions. First, I ‘look back’ and recount what

⁵²⁸ This quote is taken from the new preface to the Twentieth-Anniversary edition of Halberstam’s book *The Best and the Brightest*, first published in 1972 (Halberstam 1993, xvii).

this thesis did. Next, I 'look out', and situate the contribution made by the thesis within the International Relations literature. Finally, I 'look ahead' and suggest avenues of future research that arise from the findings of this thesis.

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9.1 Looking Back: What this Thesis Did

The empirical hook that powered this thesis was a series of similarly timed decisions by a trio of similar states to reorient their aid spending trajectories. Australia abandoned its decade-long spending ramp-up to 0.5%. The Netherlands abandoned its almost four-decade long adherence to the 0.7% spending target. And the UK realised its promise to achieve 0.7% for the first time in its history.

There are many possible ways to approach solving this empirical puzzle. My approach was to explain these 'real world' events by asking about their causes (Goertz and Mahoney 2012, 42). This thesis answered the question 'why do states change the trajectory of their aid policy?' by advancing an actor-specific theory of aid policy change. This theory operationalises the idea that states change the trajectory of their aid policy when powerful individual political actors pay sustained attention to aid policy issues. Arriving at this response to the thesis question entailed making a series of choices which, while not always entirely conscious at the time, were choices nonetheless. In looking back on what this thesis did, a sequence of four major 'theoretical moves' is apparent. In the remainder of this section, I recapitulate the thesis by outlining each of these moves in more detail.

I examined aid policy as a sui generis issue area

Steven Hook (1993, 44) argues that "the failure to consider foreign assistance as a sui-generis tool of foreign policy has precluded theoretical cumulation". Hook's contention recalls Jervis' advice about theorising in foreign policy. "While it might be impossible to formulate a viable theory that would purport to explain all types of foreign policy," counsels Jervis (1976, 18), "there is good reason to think that theoretical progress would be easier to achieve if the ambition was limited to explaining certain types of foreign policy." From the outset of the project, I conceptualised a state's aid policy as a distinct subset of its foreign policy, working on the assumption that while the issue area properties of aid policy would be similar to those of foreign policy more broadly, they would also differ in some key ways.

I embraced actor-specific theory

My review of the determinants of aid literature in chapter 2 argued that the major existing frameworks this subliterature offers for understanding why states give aid are built on actor-general theory. The selfish-selfless framework is rooted at the international level of analysis, while the domestic determinants framework prioritises the domestic level of analysis. Neither of these frameworks give credence to the individual level of analysis. This thesis has demonstrated that this stance is problematic, not just because it showed by the agency of powerful political actors is crucial in driving aid policy change, but also because it illustrated how the interplay between factors from all levels of analysis is crucial in shaping how the aid policy change process transpires.

In response to the partial nature of existing frameworks, I mobilised theoretical insights from the Foreign Policy Analysis subdiscipline to construct a multilevel aid policy decisionmaking framework which incorporates factors from all levels of analysis. The key insight the powers this new framework is the idea that the human decisionmaker, rather than the state, is “the point of theoretical intersection between the primary determinants of state behaviour” (V. M. Hudson 2005, 3). Beginning with the human decisionmaker allows the integration of individual, domestic and international factors into explanations of aid policy change because “decision makers can take their cue from any level of analysis” (Welch 2005, 23).

I built on inductive insights derived from process tracing

To generate the empirical data analysed in this thesis, I applied the ‘multilevel aid policy decisionmaking framework’ to reconstruct six aid policy decisionmaking episodes. Reconstructing these White-Paper-type decisionmaking episodes was a novel methodological step that provided a ‘way in’ to discovering the prevailing decisionmaking dynamics and the nature of the web of forces that are exerted on individual aid policy decisionmakers. Using process tracing, I was able to piece together “the course of events and the constellation of variables that led to a given outcome” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 15).

As I explained in chapter four, by immersing myself in the details of my cases, I inductively came to appreciate the centrality of agenda-setting dynamics in triggering major aid policy change (Bennett and Checkel 2015). A key turning point in my thinking was a conversation I had with Professor Hugh White, which warrants relaying again in this context. White, who was previously a senior adviser to former Australian Defence Minister Kim Beazley and former Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke, explained to me how he observed politicians—including those he worked with—becoming familiar with intricate details of highly salient domestic policy issues, such as

how to reduce hospital waiting times, because such matters were the predominant concerns raised by constituents in their electorates. Parliamentarians and their staffers are obliged to pay attention to matters that resonate with their constituents and therefore build an in-depth understanding of them. On the other hand, the knowledge-building process for lower salience policy issues, such as the defence and international affairs portfolios White advised Beazley and Hawke on, had to be much more self-directed. White pointed out that one of the implications of this was that policy discussions in cabinet regarding high salience issues tended to be of noticeably higher quality than for low salience issues.

The idea that White, as a senior adviser, had to battle to ‘create the space’ for senior officials to actively contemplate foreign policy issues crystallised my thinking around the importance of the interrelated roles that issue salience and agenda-setting played in aid policy decisionmaking. In hindsight, this is the point at which I began to directly grapple with the implications of the reality that “political attention is scarce, and it is consequential” (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014a, 6), the epigraph that began this thesis and serves as its leitmotif.

I embraced mechanisms-based theorising

My preoccupation during the final third of this project was in ‘packaging’ the explanatory utility of the ‘agenda lens’ (Green-Pedersen and Walgrave 2014) in a way that allowed me to convey the complex process of aid policy change. According to Bennett (2013, 461), one of the “two key functional roles” that mechanisms play is that they constitute “a useful, vivid, and structured vocabulary for communicating findings to fellow scholars, students, political actors, and the public.” In my case, I found it valuable, albeit extremely challenging, to create a new vocabulary to explain aid policy decisionmaking dynamics. The leading innovation of this thesis was to develop the concepts of decider salience and aid salience shocks to model how the aid policy change process proceeds.

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9.2 Looking Out: Research Contribution

This Thesis Contributes New Information

This thesis makes a contribution by explaining how and why three states recently changed the trajectory of their aid spending. To this point, these changes have not been documented in the scholarly literature. This thesis provides a detailed documentary record of these events and, in

doing so, brings to light a range of hitherto undocumented empirical findings. For example, the thesis documents the unusual lengths the Abbott Government went to in order to make the cuts to aid the largest cuts in the 2014 budget. It confirmed that it was David Cameron, rather than the Liberal Democrats (as is typically presumed), who was responsible for personally intervening to protect the aid ringfence. And it showed in detail how the pressure applied by Wilders helped fracture the CDA, especially around its historical commitment to upholding the 0.7% target.

This Thesis Reinvigorates the Determinants of Aid Literature

This thesis contributes to the determinants of aid literature. As I explained in chapter two, this study emerges from a distinct vein of research within the determinants of aid literature that I referred to as ‘qualitative studies in comparative aid policy’ (Table 2.B). Most obviously, this study contributes to this subliteration by updating it. To this point, only one of the key studies I identified in Table 2.2—that of Lightfoot and Szent-Iványi (2015, 13)—considers events from the last decade⁵²⁹. More substantially, this thesis extends the determinants of aid literature in the way previous contributors have: by pressing existing ideas and concepts from International Relations into the service of explaining why states give aid. My contribution derives from ‘bringing in’ the insights from Foreign Policy Analysis, while also borrowing from the agenda-setting literature.

This study stands to reinvigorate the broader determinants of aid literature by demonstrating the insights that can be generated by adopting an actor-specific perspective. In chapter 2, I highlighted the growing sense that scholarship seeking to understanding factors shaping foreign aid had reached an intellectual cul-de-sac. By demonstrating the ‘joining up’ potential of employing an actor-specific perspective, this thesis provides a way out of this dead end. It offers a blueprint of how to move beyond the tendency of the literature to focus on *what* factors influence why states give aid towards understanding *when* and *how* particular factors matter.

This thesis also offers a suit of specific factors the shape aid policy that would benefit from further investigation. In chapter 8, I highlighted six specific factors that influence aid policy decisionmaking that have not been well explored in the determinants of aid literature. A key finding emerging from this study is that major aid policy change is driven by a very senior political figure, usually an individual at the party leader level. I also found that crucial decisions about aid spending were often made in the context of small groups responsible for budgetary oversight.

⁵²⁹ Joanna Spratt’s (2017) recent doctoral thesis, which also draws heavily from this subliteration, also covers a more recent timeframe.

I did not expect to find that the fault lines around aid spending lie between the factions in centre-right parties. I also did not understand the symbolic weight that the 0.7% target could carry, and how the burden of this weight shifted over time. Nor did I expect to see such a strong link between the way support for the 0.7% (or 0.5%) typically reflects a deeper conviction about whether an outward or inward looking approach to dealing with global change is preferred. This conviction then brings in questions of conceptions of national identity. Each of these ideas presents an avenue for further research.

To help guide such research, the thesis advanced understandings of the issue area properties of aid, building on the work of Lundsgaarde (2013, 22) and responding to a call from Hook (1995, xiii) to consider aid as a *sui generis* tool of foreign policy. By specifying the implications of the low salience of aid for aid policy decisionmaking dynamics, this thesis further clarified how the aid issue area “display[s] a set of dynamics that distinguishes [it] from other domestic and foreign policy problems...” (Lundsgaarde 2013, 6). The characteristics I have catalogued form a foundation for further research and testing.

This thesis also contributes a multilevel ‘aid policy decisionmaking framework’ that functions both as a tool to conceptualise aid policy decisionmaking episodes and reconstruct them. With minor adaptations, this framework can be used to reconstruct non-aid foreign policy decisionmaking episodes. In this way, the thesis adds to ongoing efforts of FPA scholars to develop integrated frameworks for explaining foreign policy (Mintz and DeRouen 2010; Yetiv 2011b; V. M. Hudson 2014).

This Thesis Brings New Concepts to the Study of Foreign Policy

There are very few comparative accounts of foreign policy change in the literature, especially comparative accounts that consciously seek to operate across multiple levels of analysis. By explaining three “[c]hanges that mark a reversal or, at least, a profound redirection of a country’s foreign policy” (C. F. Hermann 1990, 4) this thesis furthers our understanding of the complex process of foreign policy change. The most novel contribution this thesis makes is in advancing the concepts of decider salience and aid saliences shocks as tools to conceptualise and explain how this process operates. These concepts promise to have utility for scholars and practitioners seeking to understand and explain other realms of foreign policy decisionmaking, especially those realms of foreign policy which, like aid, are characterised by low issue salience.

Accordingly, the main thrust of my suggestions for further research revolve around refining and applying the ‘salience shocks’ concept developed in this study.

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9.3 Looking Ahead: Suggestions for Future Research

In this concluding section of the thesis, I look ahead, and offer suggestions for further research that emerge from this study. Below I highlight three areas that, in my estimation, most warrant from further attention.

Exploration of the ‘salience sweet spot’

As I documented in chapter 8, using decider salience and aid salience shocks to explain aid policy change across my case study countries revealed a number of common factors— from across all levels of analysis—that decisively shaped the aid policy change process. The animating theme tying together these common factors was the notion that aid policy resides in a ‘salience sweet spot’ for engendering internal political conflict. This phenomenon invites further exploration. Does it arise solely as a consequence of the unique issues area characteristics of aid policy, or is it more of a function of the symbolic ‘carrying capacity’ of the 0.7% target? Or is it a function of both?

Refine the Theory of Aid Policy Change

The actor-specific theory of aid policy change the thesis advances would benefit from further refinement. I see three immediate avenues for ‘stress-testing’ the concepts underlying the theory. First, it would be useful to use quantitative methods to empirically verify variations in the decider salience of aid for a variety of powerful political actors (for example, along the lines of B. D. Wood and Peake 1998; and J. S. Peake 2001). In other words, while I would hypothesise that that Rudd and Cameron, for example, devoted a greater proportion of their time to aid issues than relevant counterparts, such as John Howard or Teresa May, is this borne out in empirical data? Second, it would be beneficial to validate the theory by conducting a case study on another similar state which decided to change the trajectory of its aid spending. Canada, Norway and Germany stand out as potential test cases.

Successfully navigating a third 'stress-test' is likely most important in shaping whatever future these concepts have. This test relates to a difficult challenge I have had to navigate as this research progressed—that of engaging with the closely related agenda-setting and policy change literatures, without going so far as to embed myself in them rather than in the International Relations literature. To guard against this trap, I self-consciously saw myself as 'bringing in' concepts *from* these supplementary literatures *to* the determinants of aid subliteration. Yet clearly, to have broader and lasting relevance, the concepts the thesis develops must also 'speak', on their own terms, to these supplementary literatures. I am confident that they do, but positioning them for broader influence will require further and deeper engagement with the policy change literature, for example, than what was possible during the evolution of this project.

Apply 'Decider Salience' and 'Salience Shocks' Beyond Aid

A final avenue for further research involves exploring the potential for the concepts of decider salience and salience shocks to contribute to our understanding of decisionmaking dynamics in low salience foreign policy issue areas beyond aid. For example, are these concepts capable of helping to explain why military intervention is pursued under the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) in one case and not another? Or might an 'international health salience shock' explain why a particular state chooses to respond to some international health emergencies and not others? My initial discussions around such questions indicate these concepts may have broader traction.

A related point concerning broader application of these concepts concerns exploring their predictive capacity. During this thesis, I deployed these concepts as 'backward looking' devices which predominantly seek to explain why decisions were made. Policymakers, however, will presumably gravitate towards the predictive implications of these concepts. While limited, there are a number of policy-related implications to draw from the dynamics described by 'decider salience' and 'aid salience shocks'.

Drawing on my research, the most notable recommendation I would make to development constituencies in Australia and the UK, especially, is the need to move the focus of advocacy efforts away from the general public and towards political elites. The 'rules of the game' that this thesis has outlined (section 4.4) dictate that aid policy change is unlikely to be driven by a 'bottom up' process whereby change is effected through the mobilisation of greater public support for aid. The effort required to 'move the needle' and make aid a salient issue among the public is too large to be feasible, particularly in the current global political climate. As

discussed in subsection 6.1.3, despite the remarkable level of ‘cut through’ gained by the Make Poverty History campaign in the UK in 2005, subsequent research showed that this effect was short-lived and that “a vast amount of effort was required to deliver relatively small shifts in public perceptions” (Darnton 2006, 10–11). Instead, as the series of seven aid salience shocks documented in this thesis demonstrate, major aid policy change occurs via a ‘top down’ approach, when aid becomes salient for a powerful individual political actor.

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9.4 Conclusion

The title of this thesis, ‘Paying Attention to Aid: A Comparative Analysis of Aid Policy Change in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands’, conveys the essence of the study. The title is at once an expression of the approach taken by this study and an encapsulation of its primary finding. As I have explained, by ‘paying attention to aid’, and considering it to be a *sui generis* domain of foreign policy, not only was the scope for this thesis to understand and explain aid policy dynamics expanded, but so too was the prospect of this study contributing to the broader theoretical advancement of the study of foreign policy. The concept of salience shocks ultimately represents this contribution. Yet as we have also seen, the central argument of this thesis is that the very act of a powerful individual ‘paying attention to aid’, is what leads to aid policy change. Attention, it transpires, is the crucial ingredient for explaining why three the three states examined here made puzzling and divergent choices about the trajectory of their aid spending in 2013. There is a neat symmetry, therefore, in ending this thesis with a call to pay more attention to aid. If there is one contribution to be drawn from this exercise, it is that the scholarly benefits of paying attention to aid are yet to be exhausted.

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ANNEX 1

List of Interviewees

List below are relevant details of 46 individuals interviewed as part of this study. 5 interviewees requested complete anonymity.

Name: **Ms Femmy Bakker-de Jong**

Relevant Position/s: Senior Policy Adviser Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, Netherlands House of Representatives, CDA Group (2004-2010); Political Assistant to the Minister for European Affairs and International Cooperation (2010-2012).

Interview Date: October 2016

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Mr James Batley**

Relevant Position/s: Deputy Director General, AusAID (2011-2013); Distinguished Policy Fellow, Australian National University (2015-present).

Interview Date: January 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Rt Hon. John Battle**

Relevant Position/s: Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1999 to 2001); Member of the International Development Select Committee (2001 to 2010).

Interview Date: October 2014

Interview Location: Leeds

Name: **Mr Frans Bieckmann**

Relevant Position/s: Co-founder and CEO of The Broker (2007-present).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Amsterdam

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Name: **Dr Jim Buller**

Relevant Position/s: Lecturer, Department of Politics, University of York

Interview Date: October 2014

Interview Location: York

Name: **Ms Sabina Curatolo**

Relevant Position/s: Policy and Media Adviser, Office of the Parliamentary Secretary for International Development (2007-2009); Head of Government Relations, Oxfam Australia (2009-2016).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Mr Richard Darlington**

Relevant Position/s: Special Adviser, Department for International Development (2009-2010)

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: London

Name: **Mr Robin Davies**

Relevant Position/s: Assistant Director General, AusAID (2006-2009); First Assistant Director General, AusAID (2010-2011); Associate Director, Development Policy Centre, Australian National University (2012-2017).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Ms Ingrid de Caluwé**

Relevant Position/s: Member of Parliament for the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (2011-2017); People's Party for Freedom and Democracy spokesperson for development cooperation (2012-2015).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Mr Graeme Dobell**

Relevant Position/s: Australian Parliamentary Press Gallery Journalist (1978-81, 1986-89, 1991-2008); Journalist Fellow, Lowy Institute for International Policy (2008-2012).

Interview Date: October 2015

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Ms Amy Dodd**

Relevant Position/s: Director, UK Aid Network (2012-present); Parliamentary Adviser to Rushanara Ali MP, Shadow Minister for International Development (2011-2012).

Interview Date: November 2016

Interview Location: London

Name: **Dr Willem Elbers**

Relevant Position/s: Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN), Radboud University Nijmegen

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Nijmegen

Name: **Ms Kathleen Ferrier**

Relevant Position/s: Member of Parliament for the Christian Democrats (CDA) (2002-2012); CDA spokesperson for development cooperation.

Interview Date: October 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Ms Mikaela Gavas**

Relevant Position/s: Senior Policy Adviser, UK Department for International Development (2007-2008); Head of Programme, Development Strategy and Finance, Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2009-present).

Interview Date: November 2014

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Interview Location: London

Name: **Mr Duncan Green**

Relevant Position/s: Senior Strategic Adviser, Oxfam Great Britain.

Interview Date: December 2015

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Ms Lisa Hayley-Jones**

Relevant Position/s: Director of the Secretariat of the Globalisation and Global Poverty Policy Group (GGPPG) (2006-2007).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Telephone (London)

Name: **Ms Tine Fisker Henriksen**

Relevant Position/s: Partnerships and Initiatives Associate, Impact Investment Advisory Services, SNV Netherlands (2012-2014)

Interview Date: Nov 2014

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Professor Paul Hoebink**

Relevant Position/s: Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN), Radboud University Nijmegen

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Nijmegen

Name: **Dr Victoria Honeyman**

Relevant Position/s: Lecturer in British Politics, School of Politics and International Studies, University of Leeds

Interview Date: October 2014

Interview Location: Leeds

Name: **Professor Wil Hout**

Relevant Position/s: Professor of Governance and International Political Economy, International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of Erasmus University Rotterdam, The Hague

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Professor Stephen Howes**

Relevant Position/s: Director, Development Policy Centre, Australian National University (2009-present); Member, Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness (2010-11).

Interview Date: January 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Mr Andrew Johnson**

Relevant Position/s: Government Relations Team Leader, World Vision Australia (2012-2014); Manager, Political Engagement, World Vision Australia (2014-present).

Interview Date: November 2015

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Dr. H.P.M. (Ben) Knapen**

Relevant Position/s: State Secretary for European Affairs and Development Cooperation, the Netherlands (2010-2012)

Interview Date: October 2016

Interview Location: Amsterdam

Name: **Dr Simon Lightfoot**

Relevant Position/s: Senior Lecturer in European Politics

Interview Date: October 2014

Interview Location: Leeds

Name: **Rt Hon. Peter Lilley**

Relevant Position/s: Chair of the Globalisation and Global Poverty Policy Group (GGPGG) (2005-2007); Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party (1997-1999); Cabinet Minister in the Thatcher and Major Conservative Governments (1990-1997).

Interview Date: October 2016

Interview Location: Telephone (London)

Name: **Mr Simon Maxwell**

Relevant Position/s: Director of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (1997-2009), Specialist Adviser to the House of Commons International Development Select Committee (2010-2017).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: London

Name: **Hon. Bob McMullan**

Relevant Position/s: Parliamentary Secretary for International Development (2007-2010); Executive Director for the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2011-2015); Minister for Trade (1994-1996).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Dr Peter McCawley**

Relevant Position/s: Adviser to the Treasurer (1975); Deputy Director General, AusAID (1986-1991); Dean, Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo (2003-2007).

Interview Date: January 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Rt Hon. Andrew Mitchell, MP**

Relevant Position/s: Shadow Secretary of State for International Development (2005-2010); Secretary of State for International Development (2010-2012).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: London

Name: **Dr Selwyn Moons**

Relevant Position/s: Head of the Dutch Good Growth Fund, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012-2017).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Mr Richard Moore**

Relevant Position/s: Deputy Director General, AusAID (2007-2012); First Assistance Secretary, Aid Program Effectiveness and Performance, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2013-2014); Deputy Head, Secretariat and key drafter of the Independent Review of the Australian Aid Program (the 'Simons Review') (1996-1997).

Interview Date: January 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Ms Annmaree O'Keeffe**

Relevant Position/s: Deputy Director General, AusAID (2002-2010); Fellow, Lowy Institute for International Policy (2010-present).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Mr Andrew Palmer**

Relevant Position/s: Project Umubano volunteer; Co-Founder and Inaugural Director of the Conservative Friends of International Development (CFID) (2011-2016).

Interview Date: November 2016

Interview Location: London

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Name: **Ms Rita Poppe**

Relevant Position/s: Policy Adviser, Netherlands Parliament, Christian Union (2007-2012); Senior Political Advisor, Amnesty International, The Netherlands (2012-2014)

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Mr Jonathan Pryke**

Relevant Position/s: Research Fellow, Melanesia Program, Lowy Institute for International Policy (2015-present); Research Officer at the Development Policy Centre, Australian National University (2011-2015).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

Name: **Mr Roger Riddell**

Relevant Position/s: Development specialist and author; Principal, The Policy Practice; Associate, Oxford Policy Management; International Director, Christian Aid (1999-2004).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Oxford

Name: **Ms Amanda Robbins**

Relevant Position/s: Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer (2012-2013); Senior Adviser to the CEO and Manager of Government Relations, World Vision Australia (2011-2012); Senior Adviser, Social and economic policy, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer (2009-2011).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Rt Hon. Clare Short**

Relevant Position/s: Secretary of State for International Development (1997-2003); Shadow Secretary of State for International Development (1996-1997).

Interview Date: December 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Ms Gabi Spitz**

Relevant Position/s: Researcher, International Cooperation, Netherlands National Committee for Sustainable Development and International Collaboration (NCDO) (2011-2016).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Amsterdam

Name: **Dr Andrew Steer**

Relevant Position/s: Director General, Policy and Research, UK Department of International Development (DfID) (2007-2010).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Mr Roy Trivedy**

Relevant Position/s: Team Leader, White Paper on International Development, UK Department for International Development (DfID) (2008-2009); Head of Civil Society, DFID (2009-2013).

Interview Date: October 2014

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Ms Kitty van der Heidjen**

Relevant Position/s: Director of the Department of Climate, Environment, Energy and Water (DME) at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) (2010-2013).

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Canberra

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Name: **Professor Rolph van der Hoeven**

Relevant Position/s: Professor of Employment and Development Economics at Institute of Social Studies(ISS) , The Hague (2008-present); Member of the Advisory Council on International Affairs of the Netherlands (AIV) (2009-present).

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Mr Theo van Toor**

Relevant Position/s: Clerk of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, Parliament of the Netherlands

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: The Hague

Name: **Ms Catherine Walker**

Relevant Position/s: Deputy Director General, AusAID (2007-2012)

Interview Date: February 2016

Interview Location: Skype

Name: **Mr Robert Went**

Relevant Position/s: Senior Research Fellow, WRR (Scientific Council for Government Policy), The Netherlands (2006-present)

Interview Date: November 2014

Interview Location: The Hague